

To, *Her Grace*

Second Edition.

PRINCIPLES

Virtue and *Morality*
OR

ESSAYS

AND

MEDITATIONS

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS



*Mark the perfect Man, and behold
the upright; for the end of that Man is Peace.*

DUBLIN

Printed at the

Request of *Dr. M. B. B. B.*

BY *ROB. RHAMES* 1783.

la
an
th
pr
tw
th
ap
co
up
ne
fu
of
we
wh

be
fid
ty
cel

75-200
B  L

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Author of these ESSAYS and MEDITATIONS was a layman, eminent in his profession, and exemplary in his life. After the most diligent and successful practice of physic, for more than twenty-six years, (but long before the advance of age, with its usual appendages, had disabled him to continue that practice) he resolved upon giving up the hurry of business; that he might find more leisure to mind the important concerns of another world, or, as he was wont to express it) “to think of where he was going.”

THAT this resolution was deliberately formed, upon serious consideration of the duty, the propriety, and consequences of such recess, appears, not only from the first

of those essays, but from his conduct afterwards; for, in the last ten years of his life, he declined being employed as a physician, save only to those, whose narrow circumstances forbid their access to the best advice, and proper medicines, both which they were sure to find with him, at no expence.—How he spent this retirement, may be concluded from the following papers, now printed from his own manuscript.—He left no direct order for making them public, only desired they might be put into my hands in the event of his death: But as it has been observed, that the works of some laymen, (Pascal, Boyle, Nelson, Addison, Forbes, &c.) on the side of religion, have been more attended to, and read with less prejudice, than those
of

[v]

of many among the clergy ; to the same good purpose, I thought the publication of them was a duty incumbent on me, in an age when such assistances are wanted.

HAD the self-denial of this excellent person allowed his name to be prefixed to these papers, it would have quickened the demand for them, and rendered the prefixing this advertisement unnecessary by the

EDITOR.

CON-

CONTENTS.

E SSAY on RETIREMENT from BUSI- NESS,	Page 1
ESSAY on OLD AGE.	19
ESSAY on the EMPLOYMENT of the SOUL after DEATH,	48
MED. I. On the DAY far spent,	71
MED. II. On the EXAMINATION of the HEART,	74
MED. III. Of MAN'S INTEREST in the PERFECTIONS of the DEITY,	76
MED. IV. of the VANITY of RICHES, HONOUR, and SENSUAL PLEA- SURES, compared with PIETY and VIRTUE,	80
MED. V. Of TIME,	86
Med. VI. Of FRIENDSHIP,	89
MED. VII. Of a FUTURE STATE,	92
MED. VIII. Of CONQUERING OUR- SELVES,	99
MED. IX. Of REPENTANCE	106
MED. X. Of HEAVEN.	114
MED. XI. Of PRAYER,	116
MED. XII. Of the WORKS of CREA- TION and PROVIDENCE	124
MED. XIII. Of several VICES which MEN are daily guilty of,	128
MED. XIV. Of CHRISTIANITY.	140

Ta — OF *Gleadowe*
RETIREMENT
FROM
BUSINESS.

SOME authors have beautifully described the charms of retirement, and the happiness of those who are masters of their own time, and can employ it in works and contemplations, suitable to the duty and dignity of a rational being, who must give an account of his actions.

OTHERS again, better acquainted with the human heart, have declaimed warmly against retirement, appealing to daily experience, which shews, that all who quitted business, soon had reason to repent of their rashness, as having, in effect, condemned themselves to perpetual gloominess and melancholy.

A

As

As those authors have viewed retirement in different lights, we need not wonder that their sentiments about it are so different. There is no doubt, that most of those who did retire from business, seem to have been discontented in retirement, and would gladly return to their former employments, could they return with decency; but it is equally certain, that such unsteady minds have not previously considered how their time was to be filled up, and their thoughts employed in retirement, before they determined to relinquish their respective professions or occupations.

You please yourself, my dear friend, (as perhaps all men in business do) with the hopes of ease and recess in some period of your life; give me leave, therefore, to offer my opinion of what may be previously necessary to make you happy in that situation.

No man ought to retire from business while he has youth and vigour to pursue it. If he retires thro' indolence, or voluptuousness, besides hurting himself, he

is unjust to the community, which cannot subsist comfortably without the mutual labour and aid one of another : And if he retires from a motive of religion toward God, he leaves half the task unperformed for which he was sent into the world, by being useless to his neighbours.

ON the other hand, an old man should not, thro' covetousness, choose to sink * under the burden of his profession, rather than throw it aside ; but if his circumstances will give him leave, should decently make his retreat from the busy world, before his faculties are impaired, and he becomes the subject of censure or ridicule ; and especially, before it be too late to search and know his own heart ; which is a lesson harder to learn, and more important, than perhaps he may imagine.

A MAN'S circumstances ought to be independent before he pretends to quit business, either by being master of a large estate, which will enable him to live in

* Quintilian tells, with regret, concerning Domitius Afer, malle eum DEFICERE quam DESINERE.

affluence ; or, by levelling his mind to a moderate fortune, and by having such an absolute command over his appetites, that they shall not desire any gratification but what he can innocently and conveniently afford.

THE masters of overgrown estates, got in business, rarely know when they have enough ; or, if ever they think of a retreat, it is too commonly from a vain affectation of spending in empty show, and inhospitable grandeur, a small part of what was amassed, perhaps, by rapine or parsimony. Such undisciplined minds can form no notion of a wise or virtuous retirement.

A MAN of a moderate fortune (for it is to such I write) has several things to consider with respect to himself, and to his connexions in life, before he ventures on retirement. He ought, in the first place, to be so far acquainted with his own heart, as to be fully satisfied that no seeds of covetousness lurk there, which may spring up to his disquiet ; lest, by throwing himself out of an employment,
which

which added daily to his income, his equanimity should stagger, and he should become afraid of poverty, after his gain has run into other channels, and his repentance will avail him nothing. Let him never quit business whose heart is tainted with avarice, otherwise he will become his family's tormentor, and his own ; and his frantic terrors of imaginary wants will be sure to poison every blessing that he possesses.

HE must, in the next place, take especial care not to retire on account of any disgust or peevish humour, into which he has been thrown by disappointments or bad usage. If fretfulness should be his inducement to quit business, he must always continue on the fret, otherwise he will lose his relish for retirement. No wise man, surely, would build any important resolution upon a transient humour, which may soon change, and leave him to reflect with regret on his rash conduct, when perhaps it is too late to rectify his error.

HE must, in the third place, consider,

that it is not an easy matter to subdue old and stubborn habits. A round of business, in which an industrious man has moved, from morning to night, for many years, in which he knew how to employ every hour of his time, and often thought these hours too short; such an habitual round, I say, must at last become natural to him. To be, therefore, abruptly thrown out of it by retirement, where every spring of action is altered or lost, must disconcert him, and prove irksome. If a man has not previously considered what he was about to do; if he has not gradually weaned himself from his usual attachments; and, above all, if he has not steadily resolved to fill up, with some new employment, every vacuity which the loss of his former business must make in his time, he will, like a fish out of water, pant after his natural element. Retirement will become like a prison to him; he knows not how to employ his thoughts; and his mind will grow torpid through inaction. There is now no passion to rouse him, no present
gain

gain to allure him, no variety to engage his attention as formerly, and no pleasing intercourse with persons conversant in the same studies, or assiduous in the same pursuits, to sooth or relieve him. Every moment therefore feels tedious to him, and he falls insensibly into a dejection of spirits, which, by precluding the hopes of good, and magnifying the apprehensions of evil, renders him completely wretched. This is a rock that some wise and good men have struck on, tho', by a little previous reflection, it might have been easily avoided; for I was well acquainted with an old man retired from business, whose time was so regularly employed, that when any unusual occurrence broke in upon his little scheme, (as he called it) he thought himself obliged to quicken his diligence next day, in order to recover the hours he had lost by that interruption.

But besides judging deliberately of his power over his own appetites, passions and habits, a man must likewise attend to his connexions in life. If he has children, it is dangerous to quit business, be-

cause, in case of unforeseen misfortunes, they must be involved in his difficulties, tho' they have not his firmness to support them. If he has a wife, he should never retire without her deliberate approbation of his design, and without an equal disposition in her to contentment and resignation in all events: For suppose him to have any humanity, her sufferings (should any happen) must afflict him more than his own, especially, if he has prevailed with her, against her inclination, to put her patience to so severe a trial. Nay, if a man has relations of merit who depend upon him, humanity requires (in case his estate be not sufficient to maintain them and himself) that he should defer his retirement, until he can settle them in a rational way of maintaining themselves by their own industry.

LASTLY, with regard to one's old companions and neighbours, it must be considered, that as interest is the strongest band of union and good will among men, so he, whose profession is any way beneficial to his neighbours, will be sure to possess

possess their esteem ; but when once he has relinquished that employment, which was the source of the respect paid him, he must expect to be slighted by those, whose interest alone induced them to caress him. Such neglect may at first, indeed, give some uneasiness to a generous and disinterested mind ; but that uneasiness will soon be removed, when one reflects that it is no small pleasure to have an opportunity of distinguishing real from pretended friendships ; and that the coldness of narrow hearts, which mind only their own particular interest, deserves rather to be pitied than resented.

LET us now take a view of the other side, and suppose that a man has been guilty of no previous imprudence, with regard to his intended retreat, and that he has laid down a proper plan for the employment of his time. In such a case, retirement should be a delightful situation, at least to old age. A recess from the fatigue, anxiety, dissipation and disappointments which attend business, and which had so long prevented his at-

tention to things of still greater moment; an exemption from temptations to envy, fraud, flattery, dissimulation, intemperance and revenge; and, in their stead, to enjoy a serenity of mind, undisturbed by the false pursuits, impertinencies, insincerity, and snares of a busy life; and to have leisure for recollection and amendment: If a man has a just regard to the longest part of his duration, such a change should make him happy.

BUT tho' several vices may be avoided by retirement, there still remain many to be conquered, which are ready to intrude upon that state; and many virtues to be cultivated, sufficient to give us full employment for every day of our lives, if we carefully attend to them. I shall, for a specimen, name only two of each sort, of the vices, *peevishness* and *sloth*, and of the virtues, *resignation* and *beneficence*.

AMONG the vices apt to haunt retirement, is *peevishness*. When a man stands no longer in need of his friends, toward carrying on his affairs with success, he
often

often loses that complaisance which made him formerly agreeable, and sometimes contracts a fretfulness and moroseness of temper, which grow upon him by indulgence. Instead of complying with others in their innocent humours or amusements, he studies only to please himself. He discovers a dogmatical sufficiency, and a bluntness in his conversation and behaviour, which, increasing by degrees, render him at last odious to his former companions, and insupportable to his own family, where the storm falls heaviest. But how ungenerous and indecent is it to indulge such a habit! Is it not both mean and imprudent to exasperate those who study to please us? Is there no gratitude due for benefits we have received? Do we cease to be social creatures, because we have quitted business? What true satisfaction can remain to him, whose rusticity has driven all his disinterested friends away? That soul must be savage indeed, which feels no joy in pleasing others. And tho' we should suppose a peevish or morose man to be, in other respects, virtuous;

tuous; yet still such a cynical virtue has much fewer charms than that which is attended with a mutual intercourse of humanity and good humour, and gives a relish to all our other blessings.

ANOTHER error ready to creep into our retreat, is *sloth*. When a man thinks that he has made a comfortable provision for old age, and finds himself no longer obliged to toil for his daily subsistence, he is apt to fall from his former hurry, into the contrary extreme of sloth and indolence, to rise late, and to lay exercise aside. But to this conduct, without calling in any moral consideration, we need only oppose health; for he who, from much exercise in the course of his business, sinks into laziness and indolence, will most certainly impair his health, and shorten his days. The humours which were kept in circulation by exercise, will stagnate and grow acrimonious by sloth, and bring on such complaints as must make his life miserable. Reason and experience verify this observation, and he who thinks otherwise,

wise,

wise, will soon be brought to conviction by his distempers.

Of the virtues to be practised in retirement, I have also named two, *resignation* and *beneficence*; each * of which is difficult to be attained, and yet extremely conducive to happiness. It is not easy to acquire a habit of resignation to the divine will; for when we have formed our own schemes, as we imagine, with prudence and caution, we conclude,

* Tho' resignation is amiable and useful in every condition of life, it is more particularly so in retirement; because, in case of unexpected losses, you have no resource but in this virtue; whereas, while you continue in business, you may repair your fortune by increasing your diligence.

Beneficence also should be more deeply rooted in the heart, after a man has retreated, than it was before, lest he should think the diminution of his income, from laying down his employment, a good apology for diminishing his charity, which is no apology at all; for a man is obliged to do full as much good in a voluntary retirement as he did in business, and has no right to let his retreat injure those who depend upon his assistance, how necessary soever he may find it to deny himself some gratifications.

that

that they ought to succeed according to our wishes; and, if they miscarry, we are apt to murmur at the dispensations of Providence, and think our fate hard; tho' it frequently happens that, had they taken effect, we must inevitably have been ruined. But can any thing be more agreeable to right reason, more becoming weak and ignorant creatures, such as we are, or more conducive to our peace of mind, than an entire resignation to the disposal of that Being, who has infinite wisdom to contrive, infinite power to execute, and infinite goodness to direct whatever can relate to our happiness? Most certain it is, that he loses the highest felicity which can be enjoyed on earth, who does not, with a chearful acquiescence rely on the supreme being, and, with a thankful heart, acknowledge his perpetual mercies.

BENEFICENCE likewise is a virtue difficult to be attained, because our sympathy with people in distress is painful to us, and the assistance we propose to give them, may cost us labour, time,

or money ; and the more extensive one's charity is, the greater still is the trouble and expence attending it. But the expediency of this virtue is manifest ; for since we must have some intercourse with mankind, as long as we live, and since no man knows whether he may not himself stand in need of help before he leaves the world, we cannot, in justice or decency, expect kindness from others, unless we are ready to shew kindness in our turn. Love and be beloved, is a maxim established by every man's experience. And the great Father of the universe, who knows that, of all his creatures, we should be the most miserable without the reciprocal aid one of another, has, for our own interest, commanded us to love our neighbours as ourselves.

BESIDES, as we can make no recompence to God for his continual favours to us, we should shew our gratitude to him by our kindness to his creatures, and be glad, at his desire, and for his sake, to do all the good we can to our neighbour.

HAVING

HAVING thus lightly touched upon a few of the many virtues we ought to cultivate, and the many errors we ought to avoid in retirement, I shall only add a very short sketch of the proper employment of every day, to prevent our minds from growing torpid, our health from being impaired, and our hours from becoming tedious to us, thro' inaction.

LET him who has retired from business, employ some thoughts every morning early, in recollecting his past life, in mending his heart, and in preparing himself, after such a manner, as may give him hopes of meeting with a gracious reception at that awful tribunal, where, by the course of nature, he must soon appear. Let him, in the next place, do something in his own profession, according to his capacity, and the opportunities of improvement which he has had, allowing no day to pass away without drawing, (in imitation of Apelles) at least, one line; and let him always commit the result of his thoughts to writing, that he may have recourse to it when he please

pleases, and not be obliged, either to redouble his labour, or lose what he has acquired, when his memory may chance to be impaired. Let him then (if the weather will permit) ride * or walk abroad to partake of those rural pleasures, which so greatly contribute to health of body and vigour of mind. What can gratify a man's senses or reason more, than to view the various productions of the fields, and to contemplate the wonderful contrivance of Providence in their gradual increase, from the opening seed to the perfect plant? What amazing variety of inimitable beauties does the florist discern in the hyacinth, the tulip, the ranunculus, auricula and polyanthus; and in other flowers of the different seasons? Or if he chooses to raise his eye from those smaller objects to the great works of nature, what can fill the soul

* See the charming description which the younger Pliny gives of the uninterrupted regularity of *Spurinna*, whom he proposes for his model, if ever he should arrive at old age. *Epist. i. lib. 3.*

with a more awful idea of the author of our being, and with a greater complacency in his protection, than the magnificent prospects of hills, lawns and rivers; mountains, seas and forests; with the august view of the heavens; most of which one may behold from many delightful spots in Great Britain. But if he cannot go abroad, let him, within doors, employ himself in some bodily exercise, of which a great variety may be contrived. After this is done, he may spend the remainder of the day in visiting and obliging his neighbours, or in such innocent recreations and amusements as may be most agreeable to his taste; and then close the evening as he began the morning.

IN a word, let him be careful to keep his mind fully and rationally employed for the present, and his prospect serene for the future. But, to prevent the loss of that health which gives a relish to all other enjoyments, let him not neglect the practice of temperance and daily exercise.

OF

O F

O L D A G E .

OLD AGE may be distinguished into three periods. The first may be called vigorous or green old age, and may, in good constitutions, be supposed to extend from sixty to seventy. The second may be called declining or stooping old age, and may be supposed to reach from seventy to fourscore. And the third period, which (unless the constitution is extraordinary good) may justly be termed decrepit or helpless old age, creeps on from fourscore to the conclusion of life. When, therefore, we speak of the happiness or dignity of old age, we generally take in no more than the two periods from sixty to fourscore; for (as we shall observe in the sequel) to desire an

an extreme old age, or immortality on earth, in the present condition of human nature, would be the most absurd wish that ever was conceived; and, if obtained, the most pernicious.

How invaluable a blessing is a virtuous, chearful, and healthy old age, when the judgment, arrived at full maturity, displays more strength and beauty than ever it did before! But such a felicity is not common, and therefore, some of the ancients would not allow old age to be any better * than a middle state between health and sickness, while others called it the most odious † and wretched period of human life.

How shall these different opinions be reconciled? The truth is, some constitutions are naturally so infirm from their infancy, that scarce could Æsculapius

* Equidem senectus nec omnino morbus est, nec integra omnino sanitas. Galen de partib. art. medic. cap. v.

† Plerisque sic odiosa est senectus, ut onus se Ætna gravius dicant sustinere. Cato apud Cicer. de senect.

himself (to use Galen's phrase •) keep them alive to threescore If such constitution should, by extreme care, sometimes live to grow old, their age, like their youth, must be subject to many complaints, and may properly enough be called a middle state between health and sickness. It is also true, that accidental violence may render age, as well as youth, unhappy. But when we consider old age singly, and apart from those contingent circumstances, we shall find that the distress incident to that period arises, for the most part, from the fault of the man, and not of his years ; and that the riotousness or imprudence † of youth or manhood (if they do not

• Sunt enim, qui ab ipso ortu adeo improspere sunt corporis statu, ut, ne si Æsculapium quidem ipsum iis praefereris, vel sexagesimum annum videant. De san. tuend lib. i. cap. 12. ver. Latin.

† One sort of imprudence, innocent indeed and bewitching, but fatal to a tender constitution, is a too eager and assiduous application to study. Pity it is, that a vigorous mind should harass a delicate body, and give it no respite, until worn out by excessive fatigue, in a few years, it sinks under the yoke,

not destroy life in its prime) commonly sow the seeds which gradually grow up and afflict old age. Such afflictions, therefore, ought to be charged on the vices and errors from which they sprung, and not imputed as the necessary consequence of age, which is often free from them.

It is equally unjust to impute such evils to what is called a man's hard fate or

yoke, and (if I may use that expression) crushes the mind in its fall; whereas, in a moderate pursuit of knowledge, both body and mind might have continued chearful and healthy to old age. Thus fell lamented, by all that had the good fortune to know him, * * * * after he had broke his constitution by studying fourteen hours of almost every day, for several years. He was indeed justly admired for his immense literature, and for the candour and probity of his heart, which was open and frank, without the least tincture of ostentation or sufficiency. How warm was his friendship, and how ready to communicate! But why should a good man shorten his days in the pursuit of any science? A vain and transient fame, after he is gone, will make him no recompence. And when he shall mingle with superior spirits, he will soon perceive how small, comparatively, was all that treasure of knowledge which he took so much pains to accumulate.

misfortune;

misfortune * ; for, generally speaking, that is but a softer name for his misconduct. In like manner, † peevishness, avarice and censoriousness, with which age is reproached, should be ascribed to mens bad morals, and not to their years ; since we daily see young persons who are fretful and covetous, and old people who are complaisant, and generous to a high degree. And tho' it must be allowed that some old men, contrary to all the dictates of reason and religion, persist in these vices, it must be also confessed, that the propensity towards them ap-

* Homer introduces Jupiter, complaining that men accuse the Gods for misfortunes which their own folly brings upon them :

———Θεὸς ἑποιοὶ αἰτίωνται, &c. Odyss. lib. 1. 32.
Perverse mankind ! whose wills created free,
Charge all their woes on absolute decree ;
All to the dooming Gods their guilt translate,
And follies are miscall'd the crimes of fate.

Broom.

† Quaerit, et inventis miser abstinet, et timet
uti.

Difficilis, querulus———

———censor, castigatoremque minorum. Hor.

peared

peared early in life, and did not commence with its last stages. Let us suppose an old man of good stamina, unhurt by former excesses of any kind, and trained up in a virtuous course from which he has rarely deviated; can we call him wretched *? so far from it, that such a man, by observing a few necessary rules, with regard to his health, may enjoy a larger share of happiness than ever he did before. Nay, some great geniuses of antiquity went so far, as to affirm that old men were particular favourites of heaven †.

IN Cicero's admirable treatise *De Senectute*, we read of a multitude of great men among the Romans, whose age was highly useful to their country, and pleasant to themselves. If we believe Cornaro, (and there is no reason to suspect

* *Profecto videtis, nefas esse dictu, miseram fuisse talem senectutem. Cic. de senect.*

† *Αθάνατοι Τιμῶσι παλαιότερος ἀνθρώπων. Iliad. xxiii. lin. 788.*

Th' immortal Gods revere a good old man.

his

his veracity) no period of life could be more delightful than his age was. But Cornaro, you will say, lived over, abstemiously and precisely, eating and drinking by weight and measure, which is a servitude too mean and selfish to be undergone for the sake of a transient life, that, with all our care, cannot be stretched to any considerable duration. I will allow, that Cornaro's scrupulous regularity was well adapted to his delicate and slender frame; but then his method of living is by no means necessary, or proper to be imitated by those of a more vigorous constitution. The late excellent bishop of Worcester, doctor Hough, eat flesh meat sufficient to satisfy his appetite; and drank some wine and strong beer every day; and yet lived in good health and spirits, with the perfect use of all his limbs and senses to ninety three, and upwards. As to his mental faculties, they seemed to be rather improved than impaired by time. Distinguished as he was, by the benevolence of his heart, he was no less so by his polite accomplish-

B

ments,

ments, and a peculiar elegance and dignity appeared in all he did and said, to the last moment of his amiable life.

How august and awful is the view that Philologus * of Ravenna gives us of several Venetian senators, every one at least an hundred years old, who frequently appeared in public together, in his younger days; venerable with their white locks and magnificent robes, attracting almost the adoration of the beholders. This was the lovely effect, says our author, of moderation and temperance, which he never expected to see again, since luxury and avarice had unhappily gained so great an ascendant, that, in his latter days, scarcely did one noble Venetian appear in public, who had arrived to the age of ninety.

You will tell me perhaps, that these gentlemen, and the Romans extolled by Cicero, were rich and powerful, which made their age respectable; but how

* De vita homin. ultra centum viginti an. producenda.

shall age and poverty be supported together? Cicero assures us that the poet Ennius * supported himself under both with great magnanimity. Virgil's old Corycian † gardener was as happy as a king. Many of the ancient philosophers lived chearfully under a load of years and poverty, declaring, that if their wealth was small, their wants were still smaller. And surely, it was not owing to their riches or power, that the first hermits who retired from the world to avoid persecution, lived so long, and so serenely in their desarts.

WOULD you know these companions of age, which make it happy in poverty as well as in wealth, their names are virtue, useful learning and health. To possess virtue in old age, a man must have been, from his infancy, trained up in the constant practice thereof. The

* Ita ferebat duo, quae maxima putantur onera, paupertatem et senectutem, ut eis pene delectari videretur. Cic. de senect.

† Regum aequabat opes animis. Geor. 4. lin. 132.

neglect of early discipline is the great and fatal error that so frequently makes youth stubborn, manhood worthless, and age miserable. If parents (according to the excellent advice of Mr. Locke *) would accustom their children, from their first dawn of reason, to controul their appetites and passions, and do always what is right, in spite of their inclination to the contrary, a short time would make them find the road to virtue smooth and easy. And if they would farther teach their children this grand and important secret, *viz.* That to learn early to contract † and lessen their wants, would bestow more real happiness and contentment than to increase their riches; such instructions would lay the first and most solid foundation for the future felicity of their children. But when parents, through indulgence or inadvertency, have neglected proper discipline early,

* See his book on education.

† Si ad naturam vives, nunquam eris pauper, si ad opinionem, nunquam eris dives. Epicur. apud Senec. epist. 16.

the

the children themselves, as soon as they are capable of reflection, should cultivate temperance, abstinence, and every other virtue, which are indispensably necessary to their present and future happiness.

As to erudition, or useful learning, the second concomitant of age that contributes to render it happy : It must be allowed, that youth is the proper time to sow the seeds of learning at our schools and universities ; but age is the season when its noblest fruits are gathered, and when the want of it is most sensibly felt and deplored. During the ardour of youth, or vigour of manhood, the mind may find some entertainment in the exercise and occupation of the body ; but when youth and vigour are gone, reading becomes a wonderful consolation to age. All the treasures of the antients in those valuable branches of knowledge wherein they excelled : All the subsequent improvements of the moderns, in many useful articles of the arts and sciences ; the various atchievements and customs of mankind, in the different ages and na-

tions of the earth ; their remarkable virtues, vices and examples : All these are lost to the man of no erudition. The noble entertainment arising from such knowledge, to fill up the vacuities of his time, which otherwise would be gloomy and tedious, affords a pleasure * that neither riches nor honours can bestow. How vile and pitiful, therefore, is the disposition of those parents, who, by neglecting to give their children a proper education, when it is in their power, deprive them of this inestimable source of consolation ! But when this happens to be the case, a man must endeavour to supply the defect of education by his own industry, which sometimes makes a wonderful proficiency.

THE third companion necessary to make age comfortable, is health. This is principally secured by an early habit and daily practice of temperance ; by an

* Est etiam quiete, et pure, et eleganter ætatis placida ac lenis senectus, qualem accepimus Platonis, qui uno et octogesimo ætatis anno scribens mortuus est. Cic. de senectute.

assiduous use of moderate exercise ; by carefully forbearing and avoiding what they find from experience to disagree with them, by removing all impediments to the soundness of their sleep , by keeping the necessary discharges of the body regular with the help of art, when nature, at any time, fails in that office ; and lastly, by making their company agreeable to, and courted by, the young and sprightly.

BUT allowing that these companions may attend us in our last stages, and that old age, for the most part, is virtuous, learned and healthful ; yet still there seem to be several grievances belonging to that period, which neither nature nor art can redress. The antients, as well as the moderns, differ in their sentiments concerning old age. Horace * has drawn
a hideous

† Multa senem circumveniunt incommoda, vel
quod

Quærit et inventis miser abstinet, ac timet uti :
Vel quod res omnes timide gelideque ministrat :
Dilator, spe lentus, iners, avidusque futuri,

Difficilis,

a hideous picture of it; but Cicero † a most amiable one. Originals of both pictures are, no doubt, still to be found, but most, I hope, of the amiable kind; especially where mens own folly or vice has not been the cause of their misfortune.

WE shall here collect, into one point of view, the most material grievances with which old age is said to be oppressed, and examine whether or no there is any reasonable foundation for such complaints.

*Difficilis, querulus, laudator temporis acti
Se puero, censor castigatoreque minorum.* H O R

Old men are only walking hospitals,
Where all defects and all diseases crowd,
Oppress'd with riches which they dare not use.
In all their actions lazy, timid, cold;
Hopeless, morose, full of delays and fears;
But eager to protract a wretched life.
Ill natur'd censors of the present age,
And fond of all the follies of the past.

Earl of Roscommon.

† See Cicero's elegant treatise *De Senectute*.

It

It is objected then, that age renders the body feeble *, and unfit for great actions. It deprives men of the pleasures † of youth. It exposes them to sudden and various illnesses from cold, heat, or other accidents. It is more obnoxious to contempt and ridicule than any other period. It stands often single and lonely, without any support, bereaved of children, relations and friends; having outlived the companions of youth, and being unable for new connections. Lastly, old age is alarmed and disquieted with the apprehensions of approaching death.

As to the first objections; it is not always true, that age renders men unfit

* Reperio quatuor causas, cur senectus misera videatur: unam, quod avocet a rebus agendis: alteram, quod corpus faciat infirmius: tertiam, quod privet omnibus fere voluptatibus: quartam, quod haud procul absit a morte. Cic. de sen.

† Singula de nobis anni prædantur euntes,
Eripuere jocos, venerem, convivia, ludum.

HOR. epistolar. lib. 2.

for

for great actions. Abraham was eighty years old when he beat the four kings near Damascus. Moses was above an hundred * when he led the armies of Israel through the wilderness. And Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, says of himself, “ Forty † years old was I when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me to espy out the land ; and now lo, I am at this day fourscore and five years old, and yet I am as strong at this day for war, both to go out and to come in, as I was in the day that Moses sent me.” Besides, great actions are not performed by extraordinary strength of body, but by experience, wisdom, courage, and other endowments belonging properly to the mind. The champions of old, so renowned for strength of sinews, with their massy clubs, and sevenfold shields, would at present make but a poor figure in a battle, or at a siege, against muskets and artillery ; and even, in antient times, Cicero remarks, that tho’ Ajax was much more

* Deuter. xxxiv. 17.

§ See Josh. chap. xiv.
robust

robust than Nestor, yet the Grecian general says nothing of the former, but avows, that if he had ten such as Nestor * in his army, he should soon demolish Troy. The strength of old men consists in their authority, prudence and capacity, to direct those who are younger and more robust. It would be endless to recount all the instances recorded in history, of old men who saved their country from ruin by their courage, experience and foresight. Surely the architect who plans the building, and directs the work, is not less useful than he who hews the stones, or tempers the mortar. Add to this, that if old men have lost the vigour and agility of youth they have also generally speaking lost their relish for feats of activity; and do, or should take delight in the nobler and more useful exercise of the understanding, especially, in the practice of doing good. IT

* Vid. Homer's Iliad, lib. 2. lin. 370. et seq.

§ Aptissima omnino sunt arma senectutis, artes, exercitationesque virtutum, quæ in omni ætate cultæ, cum diu multumque vixeris, mirificos efferrunt fructus; non solum quia nusquam deserunt, ne in extremo quidem tempore ætatis, verum etiam quia

It is objected, in the second place, that age is robbed of the pleasures of youth. If by the pleasures of youth you mean the gratification of voluptuousness, it is no great unhappiness to be deprived of such pleasures. The eagerness of men to indulge themselves in unlawful pleasures, has been at all times, and in all nations, the strongest incitement to fraud and violence; and shall that period of life be reckoned the most unfortunate, which has the least relish for the cause of so much mischief, and weans us from those appetites which reason could not controul? If stews and bagnios are not frequented at that time of life, are not the loathsome and painful diseases that attend lewdness also avoided? Is temperance an enemy to happiness? or has ever any man suffered in his health, fortune, or reputation, on account of his sobriety? Again, if old people are excluded from the pleasures of youth, they

quia conscientia bene actæ vitæ, multorumque benefactorum recordatio, jucundissima est. Cic. de senect.

have

have pleasures suited to their taste, which make them ample amends. Planting, building, and improvements in agriculture, supply them with a perpetual source of entertainment. Is not the reading of history, poetry, natural and moral philosophy, an inexhaustible fund of instruction and amusement? And what shall I say of the sacred scriptures, where they may find so many inimitable sublimities and beauties, both in the stile and sentiment, that it is difficult to determine, whether the intelligent scholar will be more charmed with the prose of Moses and the New Testament *, or with the poetry † of Job, David and Isaiah. Have not old people the grandeur, variety and sweetness of rural scenes and prospects to give them delight? And can they not do good if they please, which alone surpasses all the gratifications of irregular appetites?

* See Blackwell's sacred classics.

† Vid. D. Lowth De. poeti Hebraica.

THE third argument, that, in an advanced age, every slight accident exposes men to some sudden illness, comes next to be considered. It is true, that thoughtless old people are more liable to inconveniencies from any sudden change in diet, weather, and various other incidents, than healthy young people, because their strength is impaired †; but it is equally true, that their greater experience and knowledge should teach them to guard against those inconveniencies. If, for instance, an old man, heated with exercise of any kind, shall expose his body suddenly to the cold air, or drink any small liquor cold to quench his thirst, he will probably throw himself into some present illness. But is there an old man on earth, endowed with common sense, who does not know, from the sad experience of others, or his own, that he endangers his health by committing so gross an error? In such a case, therefore, we

† Accedunt anni, et tractari mollius ætas
Imbecilla volet.

ought to call the sufferer rather foolish than unfortunate. In short, we shall find, upon a fair calculation, that the giddiness and inexperience of our early days, renders us obnoxious to several illnesses, which the care and caution of advanced life have taught us to prevent; and that, upon a just balance, the vigour and rashness of youth, suffer more from external accidents than the debility and sedateness of age.

IN answer to the fourth objection, which alledges that old people are more exposed to contempt and ridicule, than the younger sort, as their comeliness, which once made them amiable, is lost, and their strength is impaired, which defended them from insults; I will allow, that a wicked and debauched old age does, and ought to meet with contempt and ridicule; and, indeed, no creature can be more despicable or infamous, than a decrepit old fellow affecting the vices of youth, and corrupting others by his nauseous gallantries, and vile example. But, on the other hand,

it is well known, that an useful and virtuous age never meets with any reproach, on account of wrinkles or loss of strength ; so far from it, that an awe or reverence for the decent and respectable grey hairs of old good men, seems to be impressed by nature on the minds of all nations. Surely it is no mark of contempt shewn to age, that the most intricate affairs of kingdoms and commonwealths, have generally been intrusted to the management of men of years and experience ; and the son of Solomon did not pursue the road to honour or safety, when he adhered to the advice of his young men, and despised the admonition of his father's counsellors.

As to the fifth objection, that age stands frequently single and lonely, without any support, bereaved of children, relations and friends, having outlived the companions of youth, and being unable to form new connections ; I answer, in the first place, that such a survivance comes very seasonably to detach the mind from the cares and concerns of this world,
and

and dispose it to follow, without reluctance, those friends in whom we formerly took delight, into a state of felicity which is never more to be interrupted. It is also to be observed, that nature, by reducing the passions of old people to a less degree of violence than in youth, and by reminding them that they shall quickly follow their ancestors, enables them to bear the loss of friends and relations with more equanimity and resignation than is common among younger people. But to come more closely to the objection: It cannot reasonably be affirmed, that a healthy and chearful old age is unable to form new or useful connections, because we see every day, that the conversation and friendship of a good humoured and judicious old man is more coveted * and courted, than those of any young person endowed with the same

* I was told by a physician, who had been invited to dinner at Paris, on purpose to see the celebrated Fontenelle, that the conversation of that amiable man, at ninety-six, was sprightly and entertaining to the highest degree.

qualities ; as some improvement may be always made from the experience of age, with which youth is absolutely unacquainted. Besides, young people learn with more pleasure from the old than from those of their own standing.

To the last objection, that age is alarmed and disquieted with the apprehensions and terrors of approaching death, or rather of that *something* after death, *the undiscovered country, from whose bourn no traveller returns*. Before I answer this objection, it will be proper to observe, that nothing could be more worthy of the divine wisdom and goodness, than to plant a strong desire of life in the human heart ; for otherwise, any trifling disquietude, or unaccountable delusion, might induce men every day to destroy themselves. From this innate principle, we see that when life is in danger, both old and young are alarmed. But I must say, in answer to the objection now made, that old people have much less reason to be alarmed. For, supposing that, after the expiration of the constitutional

tional period allotted to man by nature, he could live some ages longer, his miseries must increase to such a degree, as would effectually restrain his appetite for perpetuity of life, and make him ashamed of the pleasing visions he might at any time have formed to himself of immortality upon earth. The truth of this will evidently appear from the following consideration: The mechanism of the human body, upon which the vigour of the external senses and mental faculties depend, undergoes necessary and natural changes through time. All the conduits and pipes grow narrow and stiff, and the fluids must be retarded and obstructed in their circulation *. The consequences, with regard to a man's outward form, are shocking: Not the smallest trace of his youthful comeliness, or reverend appearance of his decent old age remains: His face becomes withered and furrow-

* *Gelidus tardante senecta*
Sanguis hebet, frigentque effatæ in corpore vires.

VIRG.

ed, he loses his teeth and hair, his eyes sink in their sockets, and he appears wretched, ghastly, and hideous. In the next place, these changes must occasion inexpressible pain † and anxiety that make life a perpetual torment. But what is still more deplorable, the memory and understanding must be gradually impaired, and, after some time, quite extinguished, by which our old man becomes dead to all natural affection, and utterly deprived of the benefit of conversation, and of reading, that was his best, his last consolation. His sight, hearing, taste, and other outward senses must decay and perish, which cuts him off from

† The reason of this is obvious : The blood forcing its way from the heart, while the stiffened arteries oppose its circulation : The air, included in man's aliment, expanding itself, and almost bursting the intestinal tube, for want of that power of digestion which formerly restrained it : These and a thousand other struggles that necessarily arise during the extreme debility of all the organs of the body, must occasion inconceivable languors, pain and restlessness, if men were to outlive the periods adapted by nature to their respective constitutions.

any

any possible relish or attainment of the most lawful and natural pleasures: So that, upon the whole, our *immortal* would become the most despicable, odious, and mortifying object in the whole creation; and dean Swift * had reason to say, "that no tyrant, were he ever so cruel, could invent a death to which our miserable old man would not run with pleasure from *such an immortal*:" And indeed God is very gracious in the appointment of death for his relief.

AGAIN, if, in defiance of those consequences, our old man should still be haunted with the terror of death, he should, with the strongest effort of his reason, endeavour to conquer that terror, and make, at least, a virtue of necessity, by bringing his mind to submit chearfully to that change, which he

* See Gulliver's voyage to Laputa, chap. x. concerning the Strulbruggs or IMMORTALS, where the author (if I may venture to give my opinion) writes with more modesty and good sense, than in any other chapter of his travels.

can by no art evade ; and he should arm himself with resolution for that combat, in which every individual of the human race must once, and but once, be engaged.

BESIDES, every old man has a greater number of his friends and relations, in that *undiscovered country*, than he can have on earth, and those whom he may leave behind will quickly follow him ; and shall he be afraid to join them again ? Does he propose no satisfaction in the society of those great and good men, and those exalted geniuses*, of whom he has heard and read so much, and so frequently ?

BUT above all, when we consider that the same supreme and gracious Intelligence governs the world of spirits, who rules this earth, may we not, from his experienced goodness, safely rely on him for the security and happiness of our

* O præclarum diem, cum ad illud divinorum animorum conciliam cœtumque proficiscar : eumque ex hac turba et colluvione discedam. Cic. de Senect.

future existence? This hope the religion of nature * inspires. The hopes of the CHRISTIAN are still more sublime, removing the doubts, and exalting the joys of immortality.

* Quod si in hoc erro, quod animos hominum immortales esse credam, libenter erro; nec mihi hunc errorem, dum vivo, extorqueri volo. Cic. de Senect.

A

D R E A M :

O R

VISIONARY REPRESENTATION

O F T H E

SOUL'S EMPLOYMENT AFTER DEATH.

READING, last night, in the Universal History, an account of the great care which the ancient Egyptians took to have their bodies embalmed after death, and of the immense charges they were at to provide sumptuous repositories for them, where they should be safe and entire for ages : And, considering that all this care and expence arose from a notion they entertained, of the soul's hovering about the body, as long

as any union of its parts subsisted, I was astonished, that a people so rational in other respects, should adopt such a senseless opinion! A worthy occupation, truly, for an immortal spirit, after its enlargement, to watch a loathsome carcass for ages, which, tho' formerly united with it, had in death neither use nor beauty to make its presence desirable.

How much more noble was the idea of Socrates *, who told his friends, after he had drank the hemlock, that his body, which they should presently see dead, was no part of Socrates who had made his escape from it. But the most sublime idea of a future state, and most suitable to the dignity of man, made after the image of the Creator, is that which represents, not only the perfect refinement of the mind, but the glorification also of the body, and the final conjunction and immortality of both.

MUSING thus upon the state of the soul after its separation from the body,

* See Plato's Phædo.

the thought made so strong an impression on my mind, that it kept me awake for some hours after I went to bed: Before morning, however, I fell asleep, and dreamed that I died suddenly, without any previous pain or sickness. No sooner was my soul dismissed from its confinement, but methought I immediately felt the happy effects of my freedom. All my faculties were enlarged, new thoughts sprung up in my mind, new objects surrounded me, and I was endowed with a new capacity to apprehend them. Every thing about me was so refined and exalted, beyond any thing I had ever imagined, that there are no words, in any language I know to express them. I thought myself somewhat like a man born blind, who having lived a long time in the world, and heard people often talk of light and colours, had formed strange notions of them in his own imagination, comparing them to different sounds and surfaces, but never knew what they really were, until the cataracts,

cataracts, which shut out the light, were happily removed from his eyes.

WHILE I stood anxious and doubtful, whether my new existence had any thing real in it, or was only an illusion, I saw a man breaking out from an innumerable multitude, which was at a distance, and coming toward me, and, as he drew near, I knew him to be the late * * * *.

I PERCEIVED you to be a little bewildered, said he, and came, out of pure friendship, to encourage you, at your first and transient appearance in this region. I am indeed, so much engaged at present, that I cannot shew you those things that are most worthy of your observation in this place, but I have recommended you to guides equally willing, and more able than myself, to give you all the information you desire. Yonder they are, farewell. I sadly regretted his departure, but my new conductors

* One of the most benevolent men that ever lived,

were

were at hand : The one seemed to be a youth of celestial beauty, and to have a majesty in his air, and a gracefulness in his motion, far above any person I had ever beheld ; but I was most delighted with the compassionate kindness which appeared in his countenance, and which persuaded me that he was come for my protection. I was going to kneel before him, but, with a smile full of tenderness, he hastily prevented me, and said, *see thou do it not, for I am thy fellow servant*, and only thy guardian angel. The other was an old man, whose figure appeared mean at a distance, but venerable as he drew nearer. An easy cheerfulness, familiarity, and benevolence, conspicuous in his air and address (which seemed, nevertheless, in some degree to be contradicted by his features *) so struck me, that I concluded him to

* See a remarkable print of Socrates in Menage's Laertius, taken from an antique gem of Antonius Augustinus.

be Socrates, and thought myself very happy in his company.

YOU are welcome, stranger, said he with his antient chearfulness, what do you now think of the descriptions which Homer, and our other Greek poets, have given of the state of the dead? You are, no doubt, of opinion, that their representations of the dead were only allegories, invented to deter the living from vice, and incite them to virtue; and allegories certainly they were, continued he, partly obscure, and partly absurd, and yet under such poetical **fiction**s, were couched most of our inducements to piety and virtue in my younger days; but God, of his mercy, has accepted my endeavours to please him, through a Saviour whom I knew not. I longed * for the manifestation of a messenger from heaven, who should reveal the will of the Deity to man; but you Christians, who have been blessed with such a messenger, have generally made a perverse

* See Plato's Alcibiades, ii.

use of his doctrine. True, said I, and may the Almighty open the eyes and mend the hearts of those that are yet to come : But pray, good Socrates, may I be permitted to ask how yon prodigious crowd is employed? A multitude makes no crowd here, said he, as it commonly does on earth; there is no pressing or squeezing for place among us; for, as our composition is pure and refined, whenever any thing is to be seen or heard, which naturally brings a multitude together, we presently slip into a theatre prepared to our hands, larger or smaller as the occasion requires, and every person glides swiftly into his proper place, higher or lower in the theatre; and, as we hear and see distinctly at a great distance, there is no necessity to thrust ourselves near an object, in order to view or understand it more accurately. As to yonder multitude, you shall know their business presently, for we came, at your friend's request, on purpose to give you a general idea of our common entertainments in this place. Be wise, and you

you shall see a great deal more hereafter.

WE then drew near to one of these theatres, which to me appeared a more magnificent and beautiful structure than I had ever seen or read of before. The body of the building, together with the columns and decorations within and without, seemed to be of the whitest and most delicate marble, finished with amazing art : The seats and benches of pure gold, and the area of the finest emerald : The whole illuminated with a splendour and brightness which I am not able to describe. Here an angel of high rank was explaining to the spirits lately arrived, the nature of the human mind, the beauty, extent and necessity of virtue ; the reasons of the soul's connection with the body, the bands of their union ; and the certainty of a resurrection. The audience listened with admiration and joy, and I was so charmed with the entertainment, and so eager to understand the subjects he treated on, that I would have

have continued there, had not my guides admonished me to step further.

I SHALL conduct you next, said Socrates, to an assembly which seldom meets, but happens to be now sitting. It is a rendezvous from all nations, of those who made it their business on earth to inquire with reverence into the works of God, from the solar system and eccentric comet, down to the smallest plant and minutest insect. It is not here, continued he, as on earth, where the human mind, from the narrowness of its capacity, and the richness of the works of creation, is obliged to confine itself to one branch of knowledge. Here the mind is so enlarged, that the former study of an age is soon acquired, and yet the fulness, variety, and beauty to be met with in every work of the Almighty, are so inexhaustible, that they will furnish new arguments of admiration and praise to all eternity. This assembly meets at stated times, in order to communicate their discoveries one to another. A genius practised in such contemplations,

tions, either learns from a superior spirit, the true nature and essence of any substance which he desires to know, or travels himself, in a very little time, to any remote part of the universe, to make discoveries on the spot. The discovery that he has made (for there is but one language here) is communicated to the whole assembly, and every member takes his turn ; while at the same time, a company of angels assists to do honour to the assembly, and farther elucidate, if desired, the facts related by each speaker : And, upon every new discovery, a shout of praise and thanksgiving is sent up to him whose power and wisdom are infinite. My guides had been drawing near to this assembly all the while that Socrates was describing it ; and we came up at the moment when a member, who had attended a comet in several directions, through different tracks of space, explained to the society the curve which it described, and the cause by which its motions were regulated in the various parts of its rapid course ; upon which

one

one of those joyful hallelujahs, mentioned before, was sung by the whole company. The splendour and majesty of this assembly so transported me, and the sweetness of the music filled my heart with such delight, that I attempted to join in the chorus, but found my voice too feeble for their exalted pitch.

OBSERVE there, said Socrates, (pointing to a stately portico near this assembly) a select company of contemplative sages surrounding that graceful and radiant seraph, who, to their entire satisfaction, and transcendant joy, unfolds to them those mysteries of providence which they could not comprehend on earth, and clears up every obscure step of the divine economy, with which they desire to be made acquainted.

BUT do not imagine, from what you have yet seen, that this region is destined to bestow happiness only upon the inquisitive and learned. Piety, righteousness, and charity, practised on earth, are infinitely more regarded here than science; but at the same time I must tell you, that

that all who are admitted hither, whether male or female, old or young, Grecian or Barbarian (as we Greeks used arrogantly to distinguish mankind) become soon more knowing than the most learned man on earth ever was. For, as the different attainments of men among you arise, for the most part, from the different disposition of their organs, and their different opportunities of improvement; and as the organs and opportunities of all here are equally good; the only conspicuous regard paid to human creatures in this place, arises from the different degrees of piety and virtue, which they acquired in their state of probation; and you will find that they are ranked accordingly, but still without raising any envy or jealousy in those of inferior degree; for every individual is conscious, that he enjoys the greatest felicity he is capable of, and unspeakably more than he deserved.

I must also inform you, that virtuous friendships, cultivated on earth, are not broke off here; for though every creature

creature you see, loves you, and is wonderfully ready to oblige you, yet next to the presence and favour of God, your friends are the greatest delight of your heart. Here are myriads of husbands and wives, parents and children, relations, companions, and neighbours, expressing their minds in the highest strains of gratitude and praise to the supreme being; who, after all their tedious care and solicitude on account of each other, after all the vexations and disappointments they met with in the world, has at last admitted them into these blessed mansions, from which every sort of wickedness and distress is banished for ever, and where they will see each other happy, without interruption, and without end.

YOUR own eyes, said he, shall confirm the truth of what I have told you; and immediately he conducted me to the summit of a high hill, where all the great beauties of nature lay blended together, in a charming wildness around me; and where the whole region was full of people:

people: But when I fixed my eye on any particular prospect, it appeared like an immense garden laid out with a regular variety, where the verdure of trees and lawns, the beauty of flowers and fruits, the brightness and motion of waters, and the contrast of light and shade, that appeared through the whole, formed the most delightful landskip I ever beheld.

IN yonder arbours, alcoves, and walks, continued he, you have a view of the relations and friends I mentioned, in conversation sweet and pleasing beyond all human imagination. You see also theatres, porticoes, pavilions, temples, chapels, and oratories, of various materials, dimensions, and architecture, where larger and smaller companies frequently meet to improve themselves in every heavenly virtue, to admire the works of creation and providence, and to adore the author of all their felicity; at which times, to their inexpressible joy, they are admitted into as full a view of the transcendant glory of the Almighty, and

as large a participation of his favour, as their respective minds are at present able to receive. Here Socrates paused a moment, and I looked into two or three of those temples and oratories, where, with the utmost pleasure, I beheld several of my departed friends, whose lives were exemplary for piety and goodness. Some of these, in loud and melodious anthems, exalted the name of their Creator, and *some, in expressive silence mus'd his praise* *. Their garments shone like light, a radiant crown encompassed their heads, and their countenances discovered so much satisfaction and benignity, that the very sight of them was transporting. Blessed society, cried I! no wonder the martyrs of old, and good men in all ages, despised temporary afflictions for *the joy which was set before them*. Blessed indeed, said Socrates, and yet how easily may that blessing be attained! What madness has possessed mankind, that they

* See the hymn at the conclusion of Thomson's seasons.

could not all come to this place, considering the rational and advantageous conditions required of them, the gracious encouragements given them, and that none are finally excluded, but those perverse wretches who have contracted such deliberate habits of malice and wickedness, without repentance, that our conversation and employment here would be disagreeable and irksome to them, suppose they could be admitted. But there is a very different abode appointed for miscreants, who took pleasure in affronting the Deity, and injuring their neighbour.

HE then led me to the brink of a dreadful precipice: Look down there, said he, and view the habitation of misery, and listen to the groans of anguish. What the final result will be, with respect to these criminals, God only knows, who punishes for the sake of justice, example and amendment; and not through fear, anger, or revenge, as man often does. One thing we are sure of, which is, that the Great Judge of the universe,

will finally determine what is wisest, best, and fittest to be done, with respect to all his creatures, to the full conviction of every rational being.

I FIND that Christians daily offer up this petition to the Deity, *Thy kingdom come*, in a prayer taught them by him who perfectly knew the will of heaven. But how can God's blessed kingdom of universal righteousness, charity, holiness, and happiness come, while so many myriads of reasonable creatures continue disobedient and refractory? May not punishment, proportioned to the heinousness of their crimes, and to the malevolence of their dispositions, together with some remote hope or possibility of pardon, or some other method contrived by infinite wisdom, though unknown to us, at last produce humiliation and amendment? Whereas, eternal and horrible despair can produce nothing but blasphemy, malice, and distraction, which seem repugnant to the ends of creation, and to that order and beauty preserved in the government of the universe. Does it
become

become weak and ignorant man to affirm, that there shall be no end of sin, which is so hateful to God, whose prerogative it is to bring order out of confusion? But my sight is too feeble to penetrate so far into futurity. To the wisdom, justice, and goodness of God, therefore, I leave the fate of those unhappy criminals to be determined. But I perceive that such a dismal scene shocks you! This exalted spirit, continued he, (bowing respectfully to my guardian angel, who accompanied us all the while) can entertain you better.

THE angel then taking me graciously by the hand, said, I am glad to meet you here in any shape, because I hope, that what you see amongst us will give you a just idea of the value and dignity of the human mind, and evermore induce you to pursue objects worthy of that image after which you was created. How vain, trifling, and transient, are the honours, wealth, and pleasures of the earth, compared with the transcendent and endless happiness enjoyed here! The great pri-

vilege and glory of man, his principal,
 and almost only superiority over the
 beasts of the field, consist in the relation
 in which he stands towards God ; in be-
 ing made after his likeness, capable to
 serve him, and to enjoy his presence and
 favour for ever. The time will come
 when the righteous among mankind
 shall be raised to the rank * in which I
 now stand, and perhaps a great deal
 higher, thro' the favour of the Almight-
 y, who is perpetually enlarging our ca-
 pacities, and drawing us nearer to him-
 self in every kind of felicity. My en-
 dowments, at present, excel what they
 were at my first production ; for it is
 impossible to have so near a view of the
 wisdom, goodness, and holiness of God,
 as we enjoy in this place, without re-
 ceiving continual improvements. You
 think your faculties greatly refined by
 a cursory mingling with the world of
 good spirits. How will they be really
 exalted, if ever you come to dwell in

* See Spectator, No. 3.

these regions, where the source of all perfections is visible? How often have I pitied your folly, when you have given way to your passions and appetites, and deviated from your plain and known duty, which is the only path that leads hither. I could, and did frequently guard you from the snares of men, and wicked spirits; and, in manifest dangers, seconded the remonstrances of your own conscience, by suggesting proper reasons against sin, while yet your mind hesitated between your duty to God and the allurements of the world. But I had no orders to over-rule your freedom, or defend you from yourself, when you was perversely determined to gratify your vicious inclinations. Come, nevertheless (continued he, with an air of tenderness and compassion) I will now conduct you to yonder eminent temple, and will there shew you as much of the external majesty of the Almighty, as a dim-sighted mortal can behold. And, as we went along, he continued his gracious discourse in the following manner.

O THAT

O THAT men would sincerely endeavour to entertain a just conception of the Deity, of his excellencies and perfections ; and would, in all events, resolve, to the utmost of their power, to perform the plain and obvious duties of loving God and their neighbour, and never quit the road of righteousness and holiness, to search for any other bye paths to heaven : Hereby they might secure to themselves, through the merit and intercession of the great Redeemer, a joyful reception into this region of light and truth, where their capacities would soon be enlarged, all their mistakes rectified, and themselves made, beyond imagination, happy. How much wiser would such a conduct be, than to wrangle and dispute concerning difficult points, which they do not yet understand, hating, in the mean time, and persecuting their neighbours, because they differ in opinion with them on those abstruse speculations. There is nothing more certain, than that the supreme Being cannot make himself less infinite than he is in every

every excellence, in order to accommodate his immensity to the narrow apprehension of mankind, or make his conduct, in every instance, obvious to the human understanding. Why then should such a weak, ignorant creature, as man, break through all the plain rules of charity, swell with pride, and damn and persecute his neighbours, because in some high and intricate points, they cannot think as he does? O that they would all rather strive, by a sincere and humble practice of piety and virtue, to arrive at this place, where their understanding will be wonderfully enlightened, and all their doubts quickly removed! We, whose intellectual faculties are far superior to those of man, when we contemplate the divine nature, and perfections, and his government of the universe, perpetually discover new glories, and new matter of wonder and adoration, and shall discover more and more to all eternity.

eternity. Nay, (to use the words * of one of your own species,)

Eternity is too short to utter all his praise.

As the angel had pronounced these words; we found ourselves near the temple, and I perceived innumerable rays of a glorious light darting from it, which far surpassed the sun in brightness, and yet rather invigorated than dazzled the sight. But when we arrived at the outer gates, and the angel was going to open one of them, conscious of my own unworthiness, and afraid to appear in the presence of him, whose eyes are *purser than to behold iniquity*, I was struck with so great an awe of the majesty and holiness of God, that I immediately awakèd, and found my bed trembling under me.

* Addison's hymn in Spectator, No. 453.

M E D I-

MEDITATIONS

O N

SEVERAL SUBJECTS.

MEDITATION I.

WITH me the day is far spent,
and the night is at hand. The
great business on which I was sent into
the world is scarce begun; and yet I
know, that I must, and shall soon appear
before the tribunal of God, to give an
account of my behaviour. Awful
thought! What shall I do? I would
gladly return to thee, O my father and
my God, and dedicate the remaining
part of my life to thy service. But
wilt thou accept the offer which I
make at the eleventh hour? Especially
since

since it was not through any want of the strongest inducements to serve thee, that I have so long continued to neglect my duty, but because I was a slave to my own unruly appetites and passions, and stifled the witness of God in my heart, which remonstrated against my follies? I have no plea for my transgressions, and therefore have reason to dread thy displeasure. Shall I then despair of the mercies of my God? No! that I will never do, for *tho' he slay me, yet will I put my trust in him.* When I reflect on the time past of my life, and review the part which I have acted in the world, the retrospect is indeed gloomy and comfortless. I tremble at the remembrance of my trespasses. The frequency and guilt of them are dreadful to me. I have trespassed against every obligation to gratitude, and have employed the very favours which God bestowed upon me, to purchase the follies of sin. On the other hand, when I consider the relation in which I stand to the great God and Father of all, and view the
part

part which he acts towards his creatures, the prospect grows clearer ; I must not, I cannot despair. He was pleased to create me after his own image, to make me capable of serving him, of being admitted into his presence, and of enjoying his favours for ever. His mercies have followed me all the days of my life. He has supported me under a multitude of adversities, any one of which might have overwhelmed me, had not his goodness interposed. He has even defended me against myself, and protected me against the natural consequences of my own wickedness and folly. The conveniencies and comforts of life, which I enjoy, I owe all to his bounty. The happy opportunity of recollection and amendment, which he has graciously vouchsafed to bestow upon me, free from the cares and dissipations of the world, is a mercy for which my soul desires to bless and praise him for ever. But, above all, when I consider, that God so loved the world, as to send his own son to redeem it, and to call sinners to re-

E

penitance

pentance and favour ; this amazing testimony of his condescension and goodness is sufficient to revive the most languid hope ! *Why art thou, therefore, cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me ? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the light of my countenance, and my God.*

MEDITATION II.

WHEN I examine my own heart, I find that I have committed a multitude of grievous sins, for which I can make neither apology nor restitution, and for which I am ashamed to lift up my eyes unto God. And even, yet, while I am ashamed of my past offences, I still find an undisciplined propensity in my heart to hesitate between my duty to God and the delusions of the world, and to extenuate faults, which a sincere and upright soul would condemn without any deliberation. I find also, in myself, on several occasions, an impatience of contradiction, and a peevish-

peevishness which cannot be pleasing to God, or to my neighbour, and which I would be glad to conquer. O most merciful father, how different is my disposition from the meekness, humility, and patience of my Redeemer ! O when shall I seriously and constantly endeavour to imitate his virtues ? Upon the whole, in all my scrutiny, I find myself guilty in the sight of God, and have no hope left but in his goodness, and in the merits and intercession of my Redeemer. I will therefore throw myself at his feet, for as his majesty is, so is his mercy. Tho' I am but dust and ashes, yet he is my father, and let him dispose of me as he pleases. If his infinite goodness will fully and freely pardon my transgressions for the sake of my Redeemer, blessed be his glorious name for ever. But if my sins are so great, and my repentance so insincere, that I must be punished for my amendment ; even in that case, blessed be his adorable name, and let his holy will be done, and let me submit with resignation and

cheerfulness to his fatherly corrections, and tho' he should slay me yet let me put my trust in him.

MEDITATION III.

Of man's interest in the perfections of the Deity.

OMNIPOTENCE is his shield : unerring wisdom his guide : Boundless goodness his present joy and future hope : Infinite holiness and rectitude his example to be imitated, according to his poor capacity, and a light to shew him his own vileness : Infinite majesty inspires him with awe and reverence ; and infinite justice with righteousness and obedience. Omniscience and omnipresence strike him with terror when he does evil, and fill him with joy when he does well. The relation of Creator and Father engage him to love and adore : God's natural and moral government of the world, give peace and security to his mind, as it satisfies him, that
the

the divine Providence can, and always will bring order out of confusion.

A PRAYER, formed upon the consideration of some of the attributes of the Deity.

O GOD, who didst create man after thy own image, vouchsafe to give me right conceptions of thee, and to imprint on my soul the awful consideration of thy glorious attributes, so deeply, that I may, at all times, be ashamed and afraid to offend thee. Let me, with joy and adoration, contemplate thy amazing LOVE, in sending thy Son into the world to redeem lost man. Oh! that I could, in return, love the Lord my God, with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my strength, and with all my mind: and shew the sincerity of my love, by yielding a perfect obedience to all thy commandments.

STAMP on my soul a deep impression of thy *goodness*, which every creature partakes of. O let me pay my tribute of gratitude and praise for this thy ines-

timable goodness and beneficence as long as I have any being : And let me always endeavour to do good to my fellow creatures, who stand in need of my assistance, as far as my feeble power reaches.

LET me perpetually bless thy *wisdom*, which, in every dispensation of thy Providence, uniformly does what is fittest and best, which brings order out of confusion, and light out of darkness. Surely, thy infinite wisdom challenges my chearful resignation to thy holy will at all times, and forbids my repining at thy dispensations, upon any pretence whatsoever.

LET me never forget thy *omnipresence*, before which I continually stand, and from which no privacy or darkness can hide me. And since it is impossible to flee from thy presence, O teach my soul to take delight in thy vicinity, and avoid every thought, word, and deed, that can give thee offence.

PERMIT me to adore thy *omnipotence*, which made the universe out of nothing, and supports it every moment. And
from

m,
o-
n
t-
t-
y
t
z

LET me stand in continual awe of thy *justice*, which will by no means clear the guilty and impenitent, and which warns me to sin no more, lest I should be cut off amidst my provocations, and have my portion with the wicked.

E 4

mayest not think me too vile to be received among the number of thy servants.

GIVE me, O God, an awful impression of thy *serenity* and *peace*, which pass all understanding! Clear my soul from every confusion. Wean my heart from all unreasonable attachments to this world: And for the merits and intercession of Jesus Christ, vouchsafe to bestow upon me all those graces and virtues that will secure me thy peace and favour for ever.

MEDITATION IV.

Of the vanity of riches, honour, and sensual pleasures, compared with piety and virtue.

THERE is no secure or permanent comfort in any thing but in thy favour, O eternal God, who art the *same to-day, yesterday, and for ever, without variableness or shadow of turning.* Every thing else which we possess, is
vain,

vain, fluctuating, and unsatisfactory. Those things which men pursue with the greatest eagerness, what solid and lasting comfort can they bestow? Are not riches, honour, power, pleasure, and friends, the principal objects which we have in view, and court with the greatest assiduity and earnestness? Let us therefore examine them respectively, and see what permanent satisfaction any or all of them can afford.

RICHES frequently take to themselves wings and flee away, and leave the owner much more unhappy than they found him. Unfruitful seasons, bad money securities, controverted titles to estates, losses by fire and water, false friends, intemperance, profuseness, long sickness, civil wars, and a hundred accidents besides, which we can neither prevent nor remove, may deprive us of riches. Have not I seen, with pity and regret, several, who were the boast and envy of the cities where they lived, come to poverty and contempt in a few years? Wealth is, indeed, a blessing, if it is employed in a

subserviency to virtue, otherwise it is a snare and a curse. Adored for ever be thy name, O most gracious God, who, by means of my labour and industry, hast vouchsafed to bestow upon me a competency of the good things of this world. Enable me to make a proper use of thy bounty, and to consider, that as I received all from thy gracious hand, so it is my duty to employ what is still thy own, according to thy desire. Preserve to me, if it is thy blessed will, what thou thyself hast been pleased to give me, amidst all the dangers that surround me; but if thou shouldst think proper to do otherwise, let me not only be contented, but chearful under thy dispensations, and let me, in every event, bless and praise thy holy name for ever.

As to *honours*, if they minister to pride, and tempt to sin, the possessors were much better without them. As to that honour, particularly, which depends on popular applause, there is nothing more inconstant, or less valuable: The voices which are loud for you to-day, may,
through

through faction or envy, without any fault of yours, be as clamorous against you to-morrow. Of this there have happened a thousand instances in every country. And as to titles of nobility, if they are not accompanied with merit, they make the owners more universally contemptible, since persons of high quality are, by their station, more conspicuous than their inferiors. O my God, let me never covet any other title of honour, but that of being thy faithful servant.

POWER, unless it is hereditary, is generally obtained and supported by fraud, faction, corruption, or violence, and lasts no longer than those means subsist; and the hatred, envy, and revenge, which commonly pursue it, seldom fail, at last, to overtake and pull it down. But suppose it be hereditary, yet still the trouble which attends it, and the bad use which is commonly made of it, make it, for the most part, as sad experience has demonstrated, a burthen and a snare, rather

ther than any real benefit to the possessor.

LET us next enquire, what solid comfort can arise from *sensual pleasure*? Infamy and disease never fail to attend them, unless they are constantly kept in subjection to reason. And is it not shameful to place our happiness in such gratifications, as put us directly upon a level with the brutes? O my God, let thy grace enable me to keep my appetites and passions always within the bounds which thou hast prescribed.

LASTLY, as to the *friendship* of great men, a dependence upon them will be sure to deceive you, unless you meanly and perpetually sacrifice your peace and virtue to their interest and caprice. It is notorious that an unguarded expression, a malicious misrepresentation of any thing you say or do, or the smallest mistake is sufficient to make them your enemies. And if it is a tried friend, a relation, or child, you depend on, how soon may death snatch them away, and blast all your hopes in a moment! Or, if a virtuous

virtuous wife, who partakes your cares, who studies your ease, and whose exemplary life makes religion amiable; If such a friend, I say, is a real consolation, as no doubt she is, how is your joy turned into mourning, in case you survive her! What heart can conceive a distress equal to the loss of such a companion! And who can describe the pangs of grief that must attend every remembrance of her! Here, especially, a thorough resignation to the will of God, the hopes of his support, and the prospect of a happy meeting in heaven, must come to your relief, or you are wretched indeed. How properly, therefore, do the scriptures caution us against putting our *trust in princes, or in any child of man, because there is no help in them.* O most merciful Father, wean my heart from all the sinful pleasures of this world, and from all reliance on wealth, power, or friendship therein, but let my affection be wholly fixed on thee, and be thou my friend, my guide, and my dependence for ever.

M E D I-

MEDITATION V.

Of T I M E.

TIME is one of the greatest blessings bestowed by the Almighty on his rational creatures, and yet we commonly make a very bad use of it. In the days of health and affluence we think it too short, and cannot spare any part of it from our pleasures to bestow upon our duty. In the days of affliction, indeed, we think it abundantly long and tedious; and then, if at all, are most likely to employ it well; but generally speaking, we seem to be insensible of its true value, until we are ready to lose it. That it may be of inestimable use to us, we plainly perceive, when we give ourselves leisure to think, for several reasons: *First*, Because our reflections upon it, when properly employed, never fail to make us happy. How unspeakable a blessing is perpetual duration to angels and saints, who are conscious of having done their duty to their gracious master,
and

and who enjoy his love and favour throughout that duration! 2. Because, even in the declension of life, we may still redeem the former time which we have mispent, provided we make no *tarrying to turn to God, and put not off from day to day.* 3. Because, after we have obstinately persisted in abusing the whole of it allotted us by the Creator to work out our own salvation, and when we stand on the extremest verge of life, ready to drop into another world, we would give all the riches of the earth, if we had them, to bring back a portion of the time which we fatally misemployed, in order to reform our lives, and screen ourselves from the punishment due to our sins, when, alas, it is too late. How fatal a blindness, how perverse a folly is it, therefore, not to lay hold of this blessing, while it is yet in our power, considering that it flies from us every moment, and is never to return again for a second trial of our obedience? When we stand on the brink of the grave, we see things as they really are, without any
mask

mask or false colouring. At that awful period, *power* will have lost its strength to protect, *riches* their value to relieve, *knowledge* its voice to instruct, and *pleasures* their charms to allure; so that the power which was not before exerted to defend the helpless, the wealth which never fed the poor, the knowledge which never persuaded to virtue, and the pleasures which arose from vice, were wretchedly employed, or madly pursued, and, at the gloomy hour of death, can neither give hope, peace, nor comfort.

How sweet, on the other hand, is the reflection of those whose time has been employed to good purpose, according to their capacities and stations in the world! How happy is the prospect of the great, whose power defended the oppressed, of the rich, whose wealth relieved the indigent, and raised merit from distress, of the learned, whose knowledge diffused a love of virtue and piety, and of every person who did all the good, and prevented all the evil in his power? Their time and their talents were wisely employed.

ployed. Death does not approach them like the king of terrors, but like a friend, who comes to release them from the vanity and sorrows of this world, and to charm their minds with a prospect of that everlasting peace and joy, of which they will soon be put in possession. Eternal God, Father and ruler of the universe, take me under thy mighty protection, and enable me, for the remaining part of my time, by a constant practice of righteousness, charity, and piety, to acquire such habits of loving and serving thee, that the end of my days may be the end of my afflictions, and the beginning of that serenity and joy, which is the everlasting portion of thy children.

MEDITATION VI.
Of FRIENDSHIP.

THE comforts arising from the good offices of true friendship, are so highly valuable, above all that riches or power can bestow, that the very mimicry of friendship is one of the greatest favours

vours which wealth or grandeur can confer on those who possess them. It is not altogether for their own sake that riches and power are so much esteemed, but chiefly for the subserviency of those friends and partisans which they are supposed to procure. And, if you take away these friendships, (false and inconstant as they generally are) riches become useless, and power vanishes. A true virtuous friend has many amiable qualities, which, in a low degree, faintly resemble the attributes of the deity; reason wherewith to advise, love to cherish, compassion to pity, wisdom to prevent your wants, and sometimes power to relieve them; together with integrity and truth to remove all suspicion of deceit and self-interest. In short, the benefits accruing from real friendship are inestimable: "A true friend, says the son of Si-
 "rach, is a strong defence, and he that
 "has found such a one has found a trea-
 "sure. Nothing can countervail a faith-
 "ful friend, and his excellency is inva-
 "luable.

“luable. A faithful friend is a medicine of life, and they that fear the Lord shall find him.”

SUPPOSE a man to be thrown upon a desolate island : and let a superior being approach him with a friend in one hand, and all the riches of the earth in the other, and give the man leave to chuse which of the two he most desired. Would he hesitate a moment to chuse the friend ? Of what use could riches be in his present situation ? Is there not something intrinsic in friendship, an inseparable blessing, useful at all times, and in all places, which power and riches, destitute of friends, cannot bestow ?

OUR first parent had all the beauties of the creation to contemplate, all the animals under his jurisdiction, and all the pleasures of paradise to enjoy. But when a true friend was presented to him, he was so transported with the gift, that he seemed to neglect all the other favours he had received. We hope, even at the hour of death, soon to meet a virtuous friend who has gone before us, or whom

we

we leave behind us in this world ; whereas riches and power (except so far as we have made a virtuous use of them) are then to depart from us for ever.

I BLESS and magnify thy holy name, O my gracious God, for those faithful and upright friends with which thou hast condescended to favour me. Let their good example excite me to love and serve thee. And, O Lord, if it be consistent with thy wisdom and justice, let our friendship, begun through thy mercy here, be cultivated and perpetuated to all eternity.

MEDITATION VII.

Of a FUTURE STATE.

Ἰσασι γὰρ πάντες ὅτι ἀποθανεῖν· ἀλλὰ ὅτι ἐκ ἑλβε, ἂν φρονιζέσιν. ARISTOT.

WE are in this world so surrounded with objects, which continually strike one or other of our senses, that we find it a difficult task to withdraw

draw our attention from them, and meditate on things at a distance. But, surely, when things at a distance are so very interesting, as our eternal happiness or misery must be, and when we are absolutely certain, that this distant thing will soon be present with every individual of us who is now alive, it is an unaccountable infatuation never to think of our future condition. If a world to come seldom excites our fear or hope, because of its imagined distance, it should, at least, employ our reason and reflection, because of its certainty. But why should not even a distant prospect of heaven animate and exalt our hope? To a person who attends to the natural consequences of the universal practice of virtue in any society, what can appear more amiable, or more to be desired, than the felicity of heaven?

To be admitted into the company of angels and saints, eminent in virtue and piety, among whom benevolence to their fellow creatures discovers itself in every action; where, from a pure principle of benignity,

benignity, there is this only emulation, who shall most advance the happiness of others; where those who are full of knowledge inform them that have less, displaying the wisdom, the goodness, the power, and holiness of God, to the joy and admiration of those whom they instruct; where an universal example of rectitude and purity admits no temptation to vice: But, on the contrary, daily improvements are made in the knowledge of themselves and of their duty, of the works of creation and providence, of God's natural and moral government of the world, subjects equally charming and inexhaustible: And, above all, where the irradiations of God's spirit discover his infinite holiness, glory and goodness to every individual, in proportion as that individual is fit to receive such improving communications: This, indeed, is joy unspeakable, which *eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor entered into the heart of man to conceive.*

VIEW the condition of man in this world, and consider whether his continu-
ance

ance here can be any more than a small portion of his existence, and then say, whether any other object, besides piety and virtue, is worthy of his earnest pursuit? If, from seventy years, the common boundary of old age, you deduct the time spent in the thoughtlessness of childhood, in the follies of youth, in the cares and anxieties of manhood, in the pains and infirmities of old age, in sleep, necessary recreations, dressing and refreshments of the body; how much, or rather how little will remain for the exercise of our mental faculties, which alone distinguish us from the brute creation? Would the wise Creator have endowed us with a reasonable soul, to be annihilated after such a short period of reflection?

BESIDES, if we attend to the common calamities of human life, why should we imagine, that a gracious God would send man into the world to suffer so much, and then to be utterly destroyed? The evils we are subject to, from natural distempers, from accidental hurts,
from

from our own vice and folly, and from the violence and wickedness of others, are innumerable ; in so much, that all writers, antient and modern, sacred and profane, philosophers, historians, and poets, agree in lamenting the afflictions of mankind. To mention but a few instances of the most extraordinary of these calamities : The universal deluge, the plague of Athens, the destruction of Jerusalem, the persecutions and wars on account of religion, the irruptions of barbarous nations into the more civilized countries of Europe, the late earthquake of Lisbon, and the present war in Germany ! How can we reconcile these horrid scenes with the power, wisdom and goodness of God in his government of the world, if man was created only to endure such shocking miseries, and then to vanish into nothing ? It has been calculated by eminent mathematicians*, that

* See Halley's tables, calculated from the bills of mortality in Silesia, and the rules laid down for estimating the chances of the duration of lives.

half the human race dies before seventeen. If, therefore, this life is but the beginning of our existence, and scarce long enough to discipline and qualify us for the enjoyment of the remaining part, what folly, what madness is it, to waste the present period in any pursuit which will be destructive to us when it comes to a close! Sensual pleasures unlawfully gratified, and riches or power badly employed, will obstruct our future felicity. Nothing but piety and virtue can qualify us for happiness in the yet invisible part of our duration: Nothing else is worth our attention, and whatever stands in opposition to them should be rejected with abhorrence. We must look upon ourselves as individuals only of the great system of the universe, under the government of one supreme and perfect being. We must, as far as lies in our power, aim at the prosperity of the whole, without ever attempting to rob another member of the community of any part of his convenience in this life, in order to appropriate that convenience to ourselves. In

F

short,

short, we must sincerely endeavour to do our duty, according to the plain and known laws of God, and habituate our minds here to partake of the pure and virtuous pleasures of that society, into which we desire to be admitted hereafter; and, with an humble submission to the Divine will, rather be pleased than terrified at the prospect or approach of our removal.

ALMIGHTY and most merciful Father, author of my life and all my comforts, who hast vouchsafed to create me after thine own image, and to make me capable of enjoying thy presence and favour for ever; let me not deface that image by sin and rebellion against thee. Enable me to keep my affections and appetites perpetually under the government of reason; and let piety and virtue prevail over every opposition to them in my soul, during this present state of trial. And, since the struggle cannot now continue long, let me enter the lists against every corruption of my heart, with resolution and perseverance, waiting cheerfully for that blessed day, when the tumult

mult of my passions shall subside in peace,
and temptations to levity or vice shall
delude no longer.

MEDITATION VIII.

OF CONQUERING OURSELVES.

TO conquer ourselves, or to bridle
and check every appetite and pas-
sion that arise in our minds in opposition
to reason, is a noble victory, and worthy
to be obtained, at the expence of any la-
bour or trouble which it may cost us.
Human life, in this world, is properly
called a warfare : Our appetites and passi-
ons, or the brutal part of our composi-
tion, are perpetually rebelling against our
reason, sometimes assaulting it with open
violence, and sometimes surprising it by
snares too artfully laid to be avoided.

To view the numbers and strength of
the enemy drawn up against reason, to
bring it under subjection, is indeed terri-
ble. Furious anger, fierce lust, brutal
intemperance, rancorous envy, cruel co-

vetousness, barbarous revenge, indecent
 pride, dark treachery, and all the horrid
 train of corruption that dwells in an un-
 disciplined heart : All these in their turns
 advancing against reason, constitute a
 strong and dreadful band of adversaries,
 which must be opposed with the most
 firm and resolute courage. Reason in-
 deed has its auxiliaries ; conscience, the
 witness of God within the soul, perpe-
 tually declaring for it against every kind
 of known wickedness ; disgrace and
 shame, together with the restraint of hu-
 man laws, to withstand violence and
 fraud ; sad examples of diseases and po-
 verty, to check lust and intemperance ; a
 moral sense of benevolence and humanity,
 to resist covetousness, anger, and malice ;
 and that peace of mind, and unspeakable
 complacency, which always attend bene-
 ficence, to oppose envy and revenge.
 But, alas, with all these resources, reason
 has generally proved too weak for its ad-
 versaries, in so much, that the wisest ob-
 servers of human nature have pronounc-
 ed

ed the majority * among mankind to be wicked, while only a few exalted † spirits, after a long and resolute struggle, have been able to conquer their appetites and passions, and bring them under a thorough subjection to reason.

THIS was almost universally the case of the world before the appearance of Christ; nor need we wonder at it, since the best cultivated spirits among the Heathens were dubious of the immortality of the soul. Socrates himself discourses with great uncertainty about it just before his death: And this universal uncertainty made some of the brightest geniuses of antiquity treat the rewards and punishments of a future life as mere fables‡; for if the soul, said they, did not subsist after death, how should it be affected with rewards and punishments? Or, if its existence was at best but dubious, wherein consisted men's encouragement to virtue? And how should a hard race be run with vi-

F 3

gour,

* πλείονες κακοί. BIAS.

† Pauci quos—ardens evexit ad æthera virtus.

VIRG.

‡ Mox te premet nox, fabulæque manes,
Et domus exilis Plutonia.

HOR.

gour, for a prize which no man was sure of obtaining, suppose he had conquered? But blessed be the God of all mercies, the case is now much mended, if men would be just to themselves. The Saviour of the world, who knew the necessity of righteousness, in order to be happy, knew also our frailty and temptations to sin, and has therefore given greater encouragements, and proposed more powerful motives and inducements to the practice of virtue than the world ever heard of before; and thereby has added a weight to the scale of reason, which ought to preponderate against every opposition. If you ask what these motives and encouragements are? I answer, in the first place, that our Redeemer has ascertained the immortality of the soul, which he alone could do, who came from the father of spirits, who perfectly knew the nature of the soul of man, and the purposes for which it was created. *Secondly*, He has discovered the necessity which the soul is to undergo, to habituate itself to the love and practice of virtue,

in order to qualify it for admission into that abode of purity and holiness, where *nothing unclean can ever enter* ; and, indeed, where no spirit, continuing wicked or impure, would ever be happy, or relish the enjoyments of that blessed society, suppose it could enter. Nor can I possibly conceive, what well grounded hope, or prospect, a sinner can entertain of future happiness, without believing in the merits and satisfaction of Christ. He stands, without doubt, guilty of many transgressions, for which he can neither make any excuse to God, nor any restitution to the party offended, And therefore, as he can make no atonement, how can he expect forgiveness ? Whereas the Christian has a positive promise from God, thro' the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, of forgiveness and reconciliation, provided he will repent of the evil of his ways, and sincerely resolve to do his duty for the future. *Thirdly*, He has given us a most gracious assurance, that the holy spirit of God shall effectually assist all who sincerely endeavour to do

do their duty ; and shall either preserve them from temptation, or support and deliver them when they are tempted. And *fourthly*, He has suffered death on the cross, to vindicate the honour of God's laws, to shew the odiousness of sin, to obtain pardon for the sincere penitent, and restore him to the favour of the Deity.

WITH this assistance and encouragement, therefore, we may conquer our passions, if we endeavour it in good earnest, and we have none to blame but ourselves for any misery brought upon us by our vices. What can a wicked man now plead in his own justification, when he appears before the impartial tribunal of the righteous Judge of the universe ? Will he dare to affirm, that as often as his conscience remonstrated against his inclination to sin, so often, at that instant, he earnestly intreated of God, for Christ's sake, to assist him with his holy spirit to conquer the corrupt propensity of his heart ? Ah no ! for then the Father of mercies would have granted his request.

ALMIGHTY

ALMIGHTY and most gracious God, who, of thy infinite mercy, hast sent thy Son into the world, to bring life and immortality to the clearest light, to redeem lost man, and to assure him of the assistance of thy holy spirit, under every trial and temptation, while he is sincerely determined to do his duty; and art ready, at his earnest request, to strengthen him in the practice of every virtue: Since thou hast done so much for us, O let our stubborn hearts be softened by such a profusion of favours; let us, under thy protection, struggle vigorously against every appetite and passion, that would draw us aside from piety and virtue; and let us not basely betray ourselves, and court our own ruin, while thou graciously desirest that we should repent, amend, and be forever happy.

MEDI-

MEDITATION IX.

Of REPENTANCE.

WE are commanded to repent of our past sins, and amend our lives if we expect admittance into the kingdom of God, which may be truly and literally said to be near to every individual now living upon earth, because the day of death will quickly overtake every one of us, and fix our doom for ever.

THE word, *repentance*, is, in the original Greek of the New Testament called *μετάνοια*, which signifies a thorough change of mind. When a sinner, therefore, is commanded to repent, the meaning is, that whereas, hitherto he has gone on in a course of wickedness, he must now change his mind entirely, he must be sensible of and grieved for his former errors, and must, during the time

to come of his life, proceed in a new and contrary course of righteousness.

THE necessity of this change of mind will evidently appear, if we reflect on the infinite holiness of God ; on the purity and piety of angels ; on the sanctity and benevolence of the spirits of good men, who inhabit the regions of bliss and immortality. How absurd and unnatural must it be to imagine, that creatures immersed in sensuality and voluptuousness, tainted with envy, hatred, and malice, habituated to pride, covetousness, and lying, or delighted with the practice of fraud, cruelty, and revenge, should be admitted citizens of the *new Jerusalem, wherein dwelleth righteousness, and in which any thing that defileth shall in no ways enter !* But suppose sinners should be admitted, without a sincere reformation of mind, what must be the consequence ? If we seriously consider the refined pleasures, and transcendent joys of those blessed regions, which consist in conversing, and having an intimacy with angels and blessed spirits,

full

full of knowledge, benevolence, purity and integrity; and in being received into the presence of God, to contemplate his perfections, and to imitate, in a manner adapted to our faculties, his holiness, goodness and truth; how can we imagine it possible, that an unreformed sinner should be properly qualified to partake of, or delight in such entertainments?

SHALL it be said, that the Almighty will himself change their minds instantaneously, and make habitual sinners become holy in a moment, without any previous repentance? We do not dispute the omnipotence of God, or that he can *from stones raise up children to Abraham*. But if it be probable that God ever will, by an act of power, change an impenitent sinner into a saint, why are we desired to *work out our salvation with fear and trembling*? Why are we commanded by God to *be holy, for he is holy*? Why are we told, *the soul that sinneth, he shall die*? And why have we catalogues given us in scripture,

of

of sins which are expressly declared to exclude men from the kingdom of heaven? In short, if men may commit what wickedness they please, and God will nevertheless make them holy in an instant, without any previous repentance, it will follow, that all those precepts which recommend the practice of piety and virtue, are at best, useless, and might very well be spared.

It was the opinion of the Heathen philosophers, that the joys of the Elysian fields consisted principally in men's diverting themselves with the same amusements, and in partaking of the same entertainments which gave them the highest pleasure † in this world. And Mohammed's Paradise differs very little from the Pagan Elysium. But how gross soever these notions be, they plainly intimate, that it was natural to imagine, that the habits with which men left this

† ————— quæ gratia curruum
 Armorumque fuit vivis, quæ cura nitentes
 Pascere equos, eadem sequitur tellure repositos.

VIRG.
 world,

world, should remain with them in the next, and according as these habits were virtuous or criminal, should there become their torment or felicity. And tho' the joys of heaven, which the Christian religion has revealed, are infinitely more pure, refined, and perfect, than those which the Heathens or Mohammedans have imagined, yet still our religion teaches us, that we must be initiated into these joys on earth, before we can possess or relish them in heaven; that is, we must endeavour to practise holiness, righteousness, charity, and every other virtue here, before we can hope to take delight in the practice of them hereafter, since, in the perfection and universality of piety and virtue, the pleasures of those happy mansions do, in a great measure consist. From this we plainly perceive, that the commandment which enjoins us repentance, (like all the other commandments of God) is calculated purely for our own benefit, because, without this obedience, we exclude ourselves from that felicity, which

Christ

Christ has purchased for us, and which is offered to us on the conditions of the gospel.

BUT farther, repentance is not only calculated for our benefit, we have also great encouragement to the practice of it, by the earnest invitation which our merciful Father gives us to return to him from the error of our ways; “Cast
“ away all your transgressions, and make
“ you a new heart and a new spirit, for
“ I have no pleasure in the death of him
“ that dieth, says the Lord God, where-
“ fore turn yourselves and live.” Again,
“ If the wicked man will turn from all
“ his sins that he has committed, and
“ keep all my statutes, he shall surely
“ live, and his transgressions that he has
“ committed shall not be mentioned un-
“ to him.” Add to this, the declara-
tion made in the gospel, that there is joy in heaven over a sinner that repent-
eth. And also the example of the pro-
digal son: Both which are amazing in-
stances of the goodness and compassion
of our heavenly Father, and, to a mind

susceptible of gratitude, an irresistible inducement to repentance.

MERCIFUL GOD ! shall we be such desperate enemies to ourselves, and so fatally negligent of our own happiness, as to slight this commandment, of changing our heedless and vicious course of life, and returning to thee, while yet it is in our power to rescue ourselves from everlasting misery ?

AND now to bring this doctrine of repentance home to myself : What have I to plead in excuse for my sins, and for my backwardness to repent and amend ? How often hast thou, my Father and my God, by heaping thy favours upon me, invited me to taste and see that thou art gracious ! While at the same time, the stubbornness of my passions and appetites, and the allurements of sin, have made me cold and backward in thy service ! I should probably have perished in the foolish indulgence of these appetites and passions, if thou, of thy infinite compassion, hadst not been pleased to spare me, until age and reflection have, in some measure, abated their power over
my

my reason. And shall I, to the last, make a bad use of all thy favours? Shall I now, instead of the mad pranks and follies of youth, adopt the crafty and over-reaching sins of age? Forsake me not, O my gracious Lord, when I am old and grey-headed. I have been estranged from thee too long, let me now draw near to thee with a fixed resolution, never to depart from my duty for the future. Let shame and grief, for my former transgressions, possess my soul with an abhorrence against every deviation from my duty in time coming. Let the remembrance of thy mercies inspire my soul with gratitude to thee, my great benefactor; and let my hope, through Christ, of thy acceptance of my service, (miserable as it is, and wretched, alas! as the offerings of a frail heart are still likely to be) determine my soul to serve thee, if not perfectly, yet, at least, sincerely, during the short remainder of my continuance in a vain and vicious world.

MEDITATION X.

Of HEAVEN.

THOUGH the Almighty is present every where, and is not far from any of us, as *in him we live, move, and have our being*, yet his operations on earth are invisible to mortal eyes. “ Behold “ I go forward, but he is not there; and “ backward, but I cannot perceive him: “ On the left hand where he does work, “ but I cannot behold him; he hideth “ himself on the right hand, that I can- “ not see him *.” Heaven is the place where he displays his glory, and manifests himself openly to his servants. It will also be the final and everlasting abode of just men made perfect, where their joys will be complete beyond the utmost extent of their hopes or wishes. Those blessed souls which adhered to the commandments of God, in spite of all the temptations and snares of a wicked world, and ran with patience the race that was set before them, are there,

* Job xxiii. 8, 9.

through the merits and intercession of the Redeemer of mankind, rewarded with everlasting felicity and glory. O wretched and foolish heart! wilt thou forfeit this prospect of happiness for the sake of gratifying an unruly appetite, a corrupt passion, or an ill-judged affection, for any thing that this transitory life can afford? Can any society be equal to that of angels? Can any felicity be conceived so great, as that of being admitted into the presence and favour of God? And (to speak of joys less sublime and more familiar to our narrow apprehensions) what charms will it not add to the heavenly mansions, to enjoy the innocent and entertaining conversation of those great men, who, in all ages, have made themselves renowned for virtue, genius, and knowledge? especially as those extraordinary qualities are then discovered pure and unmixed with vice or error. What a heightening it is to this entertainment, that envy, hatred, and malice, so detestable and mischievous on earth, are now no more; and that their place is supplied by love, sincerity and univer-

fal beneficence. Here poverty, sickness, and pain are unknown, where prosperity, vigour, and ease reign for ever! Moroseness and peevishness are excluded, while chearfulness and complacency adorn every mind. Fraud, falshood, and oppression are all strangers, in a region where goodness, justice, and uprightness dwell in every heart; where joy smiles in every eye, and glory crowns every head; and where (in the intervals of praise, adoration, and thanksgiving, offered to the majesty of the supreme being) a free and familiar conversation with angels, saints, and ever blessed friends, enlarges, ennobles, and exalts the soul.

MEDITATION XI.

Of P R A Y E R.

WHEN we consider our natural dependence on God, who created us, who preserves us, who supplies all our wants here, and from whom alone we expect happiness hereafter, there cannot be a more valuable privilege conferred upon us, than to have daily and hourly

hourly access to this great and gracious Being, to be permitted to lay all our complaints before him, and to offer our supplications to him for relief. But happily for us, we are not only permitted, we are also invited and exhorted to pray to him, and assured, that he who seeketh shall find, and that to him who knocketh, it shall be opened. That it is our highest honour, and the greatest mercy that can be shewed us, to be thus required to address God, we shall easily apprehend, if, on the one hand, we consider his infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, and, on the other hand, our own weakness, ignorance, and wretchedness; that we are the lowest of all the rational creation, and that by sin we have made ourselves *miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.*

BUT why should we pray, since God knows our wants before we ask, and our ignorance in asking, and since his goodness is infinite towards his creatures, and ready to supply all their necessities? I answer, 1. Because God commands us to pray, and what are we, that we should dispute his orders? 2. To pray, shews

that we are sensible of our wants and of our dependence, which should make us more earnest in asking assistance, and more thankful when it is obtained.

WHAT is prayer? Prayer is a devout lifting up of our souls to God in faith and hope, to implore his blessing, and comprehends adoration, confession, petition and thanksgiving.

As to adoration, what can be more reasonable, or becoming our condition, than to adore him to whom we owe all our comforts? That eternal being, of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, from whom we derive our existence, and upon whom alone we depend for every good thing that we either enjoy or expect. The thought is boundless! For whether we contemplate the ineffable perfection of the Deity, or our own pitiable indigence, a thousand reasons crowd in upon us, which engage us to thank, to praise, and to adore our Friend, our Father, and our God?

A SECOND part of prayer is confession. How can we expect forgiveness of our sins, unless we are sensible of them?

And

And if we are sensible that we have offended, our next step is to be sorry for them, to take shame to ourselves, to confess our trespasses ingenuously before our master whom we have offended, to implore his pardon, for the sake of our Redeemer, and resolve, with the assistance of his Holy Spirit, to sin no more. Since he, who knows our frailty, has been graciously pleased to accept of our repentance, instead of unsinning obedience, which is not in our power, shall we endeavour to hide those sins of which we are determined to repent? No, surely; we must acknowledge our faults before we can be in a disposition to amend. It is true, that God, in whose presence we commit all our wickedness, knows them perfectly without our confession; but it is also true, that God requires our acknowledgment, not to inform him of our guilt, but to testify our contrition, and our desire to return from a course of unrighteousness and misery, into the road of virtue and happiness.

PRAYER, in the third place, comprehends petition, according to that excellent

lent pattern set before us by our Lord, in which there are four petitions; 1. Give us this day our daily bread. 2. Forgive us our trespasses. 3. Lead us not into temptation. 4. Deliver us from evil. The reasonableness and necessity of these petitions are obvious to the slightest consideration. 1. Give us this day our daily bread. There is no man, from the King who sits on the throne, to the beggar who lies in the street, but stands in need of preferring this petition. Suppose a man ever so rich, he cannot eat his silver or gold, or clothe himself with his woods or fields; and unless the Almighty vouchsafes to crown the year with his blessing, there will neither be bread to eat, nor wool or flax to clothe the greatest among mankind. Lamentable, therefore, is the vanity of that fool, who fancies himself independent on God in any respect, since the highest and haughtiest man on earth, (however his pride and ignorance may prompt him to think otherwise) depends on God for his daily subsistence, as much as the beasts of the field, and the fishes
of

of the sea, who all *wait upon him, that he may give them their meat in due season.*

THE second petition, Forgive us our trespasses, is not less necessary to be preferred. As, on the one hand, we sin daily against God, and the imaginations of our hearts are evil continually; and since, on the other hand, God is holy, and hates sin; it follows, that we must be either punished for our iniquities, or obtain forgiveness of them on the conditions proposed in the gospel.

As to the third petition, Lead us not into temptation. When we reflect on our situation in this world, and the many obstructions we meet with in the road to virtue, we have great reason to watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation. We find, from sad experience, that the enticements of the world, from without, are laying continual snares for us, to make us prefer pleasure, profit or power, to our duty; while our appetites and passions from within, are ready to betray, and give us up to their delusion: What can a wretch do, therefore, who is destitute of God's assistance to protect him
from

from such powerful adversaries? Is he not like a ship in a tempest without a pilot, ready to be dashed to pieces by the first rock or bank that comes in his way?

THE fourth petition, Deliver us from evil, is also indispensibly required to be offered up in our daily prayers. What a dreadful number of moral and natural evils do continually surround us, which we can neither foresee nor prevent! And where can we be secure from their attacks, but under the protection of that Being of infinite goodness and power, who is able and willing to assist us, if we make him our sole dependence?

IN the last place, prayer comprehends thanksgiving. If food and raiment, health and liberty, the use of reason, and sense of religion, the prospect of felicity and every blessing which we enjoy here, or hope for hereafter, can fill our hearts with gratitude to the source from which we derive them all, ought we not to bless and magnify the glorious name of God, and to have his praise perpetually in our hearts and mouths?

O MOST

O most holy and merciful God, slow to anger, and of great kindness, I have sinned, what shall I say unto thee, O thou preserver of men? If thou wilt contend with me, I cannot answer one of a thousand. I am ashamed to lift up my face unto thee. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy great goodness, according to the multitude of thy mercies, do away mine iniquities, And let the sufferings of thy beloved son atone for my trespasses. Lead me for my Redeemer's sake, O lead me in the way everlasting. Teach me to do the thing that pleases thee, for thou art my God. Guide me with thy counsel here, and after that receive me with mercy. Forsake me not when I am old and grey headed, but conduct me by thy Holy Spirit through the few steps which yet remain of my passage to that eternal place, where temptation, sin, sorrow, and death are unknown. Let thy kingdom of universal righteousness, charity, holiness and happiness come; and let thy blessed will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Be gracious to all in distress, O Father of the universe,

universe, and let every knee bow to thee, every tongue confess to thee, and every heart adore thee, and let the earth be full of the knowledge and praise of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

MEDITATION XII.

Of the Works of Creation and Providence.

IT is impossible to observe what passes in the natural or moral world, without acknowledging the wonderful power and wisdom of God in the creation of the one, and the government of the other. Why does the sun move annually in the ecliptic, and not in the equator? Is it not to give thereby a comfortable vicissitude of cold and heat, of winter and summer to the earth; and, by that means, to bestow food and health on all its inhabitants? For winter *, tho' it seems desolating to the inattentive, is nevertheless happily employed, in replenishing the soil with materials for vegetation, necessary to the productions of the following

* See essay on the theory of agriculture.

seasons, which, by their gradual heat, bring the fruits of the earth to their proper growth and ripeness. Why is the ocean agitated with a never ceasing flux and reflux? Is it not to prevent its waters from stagnating and growing putrid, and thereby destroying not only all the living creatures within it, but also all that are near it, as far as the noisome stench, and pestiferous infection could extend? What rolls the earth every day on its axis? The merciful appointment of God, in order to apply its several parts, successively, to the enlivening rays of the sun, which cherish all its inhabitants, and produce such an endless variety of provisions for their subsistence. Why do the fixed stars seem, like so many suns, to animate their respective systems, through the immense bounds of space? Do they not set forth to every discerning eye, the infinite power, glory, and omnipresence of the Creator? And do not the respective inhabitants of these systems seem all to partake of his fatherly goodness? But to describe worthily the majesty and wisdom of the Almighty in his works, great or small, is

above

above the reach of the human mind ; as we see, that every year, and every day, for ages past, have to the diligent enquirer, discovered new beauties in them all ; and will, for ages to come, still discover new beauties and wonders, until the enquiry ceases, or time shall be no more. For, are they not all contrived with such amazing powers and springs of action, so properly adjusted to their respective natures, that they must for ever declare the incomprehensible wisdom of the maker, and perpetually raise the admiration of all diligent and judicious observers ?

NOR are the wisdom and goodness of God less conspicuous in his moral government of the world, than in its first production. Having made man capable of happiness, he has given him all imaginable encouragement to attain that happiness. He has enabled every soul clearly to discern the essential and eternal difference between moral good and evil. He has endowed him with freedom of will, to chuse the one, and refuse the other. He has promised endless felicity to those

who

who will pursue a course of virtue, and has denounced a perpetual misery to such as will persist in wickedness. The precepts which we are commanded to observe and practise, all naturally tend to promote our peace and satisfaction here, as well as our endless beatitude hereafter. He has comforted man under his natural frailties and infirmities, by accepting repentance and amendment, instead of un-finning obedience, for the sake of the atonement made for sin by the Redeemer of the universe. He has promised the aid of his Spirit to those who sincerely endeavour to serve him. He exhorts them to offer up their prayers to him for a daily supply of all their wants, with assurances, that he will effectually relieve them, by doing always what will tend most to the advantage of the sincere and upright petitioner. Add to this, that he has planted conscience in the soul, to sting man with remorse upon committing wickedness, but to give serenity, peace and joy to him, who has performed his duty.

LASTLY,

LASTLY, as to a particular providence over individuals, a slight attention to what happens, either to one's self, or one's acquaintance, every day cannot fail to exhibit many signal proofs of God's immediate care over every single creature in the universe, and of the truth of what the gospel declares, that he clothes the grass of the field, and not a sparrow is forgotten before him. What others have observed, I know not; but as to myself, so many and so various have been the mercies, which in every period of my life, I received from my gracious God, that I have not words sufficient to express my thankfulness.

MEDITATION XIII.

Concerning several Vices of which men are daily guilty, without attending to the heinousness of them.

SOME of these vices are uncleanness, covetousness, anger, calumny, revenge, envy, pride, lying, intemperance, loss of time, neglect of duty, repining at the dispensations of providence, fretfulness, ingratitude, deceiving in small things,

things, and a heart not upright with God: All which I shall briefly consider in the order here laid down.

IN committing uncleanness, you multiply sin, by insnaring the innocent, and when once you have debauched and ruined them, it is out of your power to reclaim them, or make them sufficient reparation for the guilt into which you have drawn them. Thus you bring an accumulated guilt upon your own head, for which you stand accountable to the great Judge of the universe. In what manner can you atone for that multiplication of sin? Let us suppose, that, by repentance and amendment, you should obtain pardon for yourself, yet the other party may persist in vice, to which you pointed the way; and would it not make your heart tremble, and fill you with terror and amazement, to reflect, that for a momentary gratification, you have been the cause of infinite misery to a creature, made after the image of God, which might have continued innocent, had not your fatal temptation intervened?

COVETOUS-

COVETOUSNESS is idolatry, by which you affront the Almighty, because you give that attention, and pay that assiduous service to mammon, which is due to God only. It is also frequently productive of great distress to your neighbour, for which you must make him a reparation, or expect to be proportionably punished, whether you have got possession of his substance, either by fraud, or by violence. And should it not make the heart of the covetous man tremble, to think how he is represented by the Holy Spirit, who calls him *the covetous whom God abhorreth!*

WRATH is like an unruly horse, which you must curb and keep in with a strong bridle, for if once you give him his head, he may run away with you to your destruction. Or, it is like fire, from which you must keep at a distance, for if it once seizes upon you, it may burn you to ashes. Be cautious therefore, and when you first perceive your choler or indignation to be moved, flee and make your escape to God for protection, and implore his aid, that it may not fasten upon you

you suddenly. Your own reason, if you will consult it, will teach you the necessity of this caution and retreat. Since, therefore, you know the consequence, check your passion by all means possible, and parry the danger.

CALUMNY is both foolish and wicked, it does no good to the reviler, nor works any reformation in the reviled. This sin proceeds most frequently from malice, which is odious to the Deity ; so that, in committing it, you offend the great Lord and Father of the universe, without doing the least good, either to yourself, or to another.

REVENGE is inconsistent with peace here, or happiness hereafter. In contriving the means of executing vengeance, you lose your inward satisfaction and tranquility of mind ; and in resolving not to forgive your enemies, according to God's positive command, you forfeit your claim to that pardon of your own trespasses, which is promised to those only who forgive the injuries done to themselves. Is there any degree of wisdom in this behaviour ? You will not forgive

give an hundred pence to your fellow servant, but execute your revenge, and take him by the throat, until he pays the debt, regardless, at the same time, of the ten thousand talents you owe to your master, who, at your humble request, would have compassion on you, if your unrelenting cruelty to another had not obstructed his mercy.

ENVY is both an impious and audacious vice. To be dissatisfied with the distribution that the wise Father of the universe makes of the good things of this world, which are all his own property, and which, for excellent reasons, he dispenses to different persons, in various proportions, looks like calling him to account for his government, as if frail man could have ordered things better, and made a more equitable partition. Shocking blasphemy! What impiety and impudence is this! and yet to envy our neighbour for the favours which God has bestowed upon him, is to arraign providence as partial to him, and regardless of our extraordinary merit, of which

we

we ourselves entertain a high and groundless opinion.

PRIDE is a silly unnatural vice, and was not made for man who sprang from the dust. What has he to be proud of? Is birth, beauty, or bodily strength, a just cause for pride? As to birth, is it not more honourable to work out one's own dignity, and derive his esteem in the world from virtue and merit, than to be the degenerate offspring of an illustrious family? The triumph of strength or beauty is but of a short duration, and gives no ground for pride. A sharp fit of sickness will soon demolish both; or, should they escape such a stroke, the course of a few years will be sure to complete their ruin. Have we any greater reason to be proud of our intellectual faculties, which are equally liable with our bodies to decay, and even to perish by a thousand accidents? If a man has good moral qualities, these surely ought not to swell his pride; for whoever seriously examines his own heart, and the past actions of his life, will, in the progress of that examination, find much

H

greater

greater cause for shame and confusion of face, than for pride and arrogance.

LYING is an infamous debasing sin, that brings shame and reproach upon the liar ; and acts in direct opposition to the plain purpose of God, in giving the use of speech to man, which was, that thereby he might communicate his real and genuine thoughts to his neighbour. If a lie is told on purpose to deceive, the guilt is doubled, by the conjunction of fraud with falshood. If it proceeds from vanity, to magnify one's self, it rarely answers the purpose of the liar, because a custom of lying sinks a man into a contemptible wretch, and all that he affirms goes for nothing. In short, it is a vile unmanly vice, introducing confusion (as far as the influence of the liar reaches) into the moral government of the world, odious to God, and among men particularly disgraceful.

INTEMPERANCE comprehends every excess in eating or drinking, and indulging our appetites or passions, which in any measure disorders the mind or body, or renders either of them unfit to serve
God,

God, our neighbours, or ourselves. The pleasure of eating or drinking lasts no longer than until our natural appetite for them is satisfied, which is always within the bounds of moderation : But to eat or drink more than answers the purpose of refreshment, is a brutal indulgence that wastes the good creatures of God, exposes us to distempers and infamy, and plainly proves us unworthy of that reason by which we are distinguished from the brute creation ; And all excesses of different kinds are equally pernicious.

Loss of time is a fatal error. This world is our state of trial. If we employ our continuance here as we ought to do, we shall meet with a gracious reception hereafter ; but if we mispend and trifle it away, there is no calling the time back again ; we shall have cause for ever to lament that we have not made a better use of it. When a man is near his end, and ready to appear before the tribunal of God, to give an account of his actions, what would he not give for a reprieve of a few days of health, to prepare himself, by serious repentance and

amendment, for such an appearance? Why will he therefore, unhappily, lose his time, while yet he has it in his power to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling?

To neglect our duty of praise and adoration to God is an ungrateful and foolish sin. Our whole dependence is upon him, and if he should withdraw his protection but for a moment, we are undone. He requires not all our attention, or all our time, but only that our hearts should be sincere and upright in our attachment to him. And, if we have any true sense of his goodness, and of our own wants and weakness, we ought to rejoice in the privilege of being permitted to adore his perfections, and to implore his protection and mercy.

To repine at the dispensations of providence is a complicated sin, more enormous than is commonly imagined. 1. It includes pride, and a high conceit of our own merit, as if we thought ourselves overlooked or neglected, while those we fancy our inferiors are more regarded. 2. It censures the wisdom
and

and justice of God in the government of the world, as if he was partial in his distributions, and did not pay a sufficient regard to persons of our importance. Detestable vanity ! 3. It argues a fretful, discontented, ungrateful spirit, a frame of mind which excludes peace and contentment wherever it has taken possession : So that this sin of repining, comprehends pride, audaciousness, impiety, ingratitude, and a peevishness inconsistent with any degree of felicity.

FRETFULNESS is also a heinous complicated guilt. It is a mixture of pride and impatience. We think ourselves such curiosities, that every thing should be subservient to our humours ; and when any thing happens to obstruct our profit or pleasure, our indignation is presently raised, be the obstruction ever so harmless, and we treat it with scorn and insolence. Did the great God, who sees our folly and madness, treat us as we do our fellow creatures, with contempt and disdain, what miserable, unhappy wretches must we be ? And how dare we take the liberty to insult or abuse

persons much more valuable, perhaps, in the sight of God than ourselves?

INGRATITUDE is reckoned such an odious vice, even among sinful creatures like ourselves, that he who is guilty of it, is thought capable of any wickedness. But what is our ingratitude to man, compared with our ingratitude to the Almighty? To desert from, or rebel against him, from whom we have our being, and every blessing we enjoy, is a most deplorable infatuation. Ought not a generous mind rather suffer any affliction, than run the risk of wilfully offending so much condescension and goodness, which is still ready to receive men upon their repentance and amendment, notwithstanding their former baseness and unthankfulness?

To deceive in small things, shews a corrupt heart; and he who will give himself the liberty to deceive in small matters, would undoubtedly deceive in the greatest, because they bring more gain, if he were not afraid that great frauds would be more carefully enquired into, and sooner discovered to his confusion
and

and ruin. For, as he is not influenced by any principle of regard to God, who sees all he does, but only by the fear of shame and temporary punishment, he is full as guilty who cheats in a trifle, as he who defrauds in a matter of great consequence. All the difference seems to be, that the loss is not so great to the person injured, but still the badness of heart in the deceiver is equally unjustifiable.

A HEART not upright with God, is a heart divided between God and mammon: A heart, which, like the Roman senate under Tiberius, would add Christ to the number of their gods, but would worship all their other false deities at the same time. He is called a jealous God, and requires the whole heart, and surely a heart fixed on any idol is not worth his acceptance.

A THOUSAND reasons, if we were capable of reflecting wisely, would determine us to serve and worship him alone, with sincerity and faithfulness; and let us not deceive ourselves, he will not be mocked, and can never be pleased with partial service: O my gracious God, let

me

me never hesitate between my duty to thee, and the delusion of my appetites and passions; let my heart be honest, pure, and constant, in an universal obedience and resignation to thy holy will, all the days of my life.

MEDITATION XIV.

Of CHRISTIANITY.

FOR my part, I see in the Christian system such evident marks of truth, probity and goodness, and such proofs of the approbation of the Deity, that I must believe it came from heaven.

IN the first place, the attributes of the Almighty, as they are plainly set forth in this system, and the sincerity with which man is directed to worship him in spirit and in truth, are worthy of the ruler of the universe; which, so far as I know, cannot be said of any other religion. Besides, the precepts given in the gospel, for the conduct of our lives, have all of them a natural tendency to secure our peace and happiness throughout the whole duration of our existence.

IN the next place, the many beneficent miracles performed publicly by Jesus Christ and his apostles, in confirmation of their mission, are, to my apprehension, a sure testimony of the approbation of God, without whose immediate power they could not be performed. But especially the resurrection of our Lord (which is proved by a stronger and fuller evidence than perhaps any matter of fact ever was) is a demonstration that he was sent by God ; for sure, no man will say, that the Almighty would enter into a collusion with an impostor, and exert his omnipotence to give sanction to a lie.

AGAIN, our Saviour's prediction of his own death and resurrection ; of the descent of the Holy Ghost ; of the conversion of the Gentiles ; of the calamities of the Jews, the total destruction of their city, temple, and government ; which we know at this day to have been all completely verified, were, at the time they happened, an irresistible, and still continue a permanent demonstration of his divine mission. Lastly, I can see no worldly interest, or selfish views of riches, honour,

honour, pleasure, or power, pursued by Jesus Christ, or his apostles, or by the primitive Christians; but, on the contrary, I find them meekly and patiently suffering all manner of hardships and cruelties for the sake of truth, and for the benefit of mankind.

O MOST gracious God, as I am guilty of many grievous sins, for which I have no excuse to plead, and can make no restitution, what hope of pardon can I entertain but thro' the merits of Christ, and upon the conditions of the gospel? I owed unsinning obedience to my Maker, but that law I have broken, and thereby forfeited my claim to his favour. Without mercy I must be for ever miserable; but where shall I find that mercy? I perceive by the Christian system, O my God, that thou hast sent thy Son to the world, to offer his life a sacrifice for sin, and to reconcile man to thee: For this revelation of thy will, and for the inestimable benefit thereby accruing to mankind, I humbly desire to magnify and adore thy name for ever. I desire also to embrace the conditions of the gospel
to

to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world, to the utmost of my power, and to rely on the satisfaction made by my Redeemer for that mercy which I myself could never merit. O let all my past sins, for which I sincerely ask thy pardon, be washed away by the blood of the Lamb of God, and give me the aid of thy blessed Spirit, to root out of my heart all sinful and corrupt affections, and to implant in their room, all those devout and pious dispositions that become the worshippers of the holy Jesus. Lord Jesu, receive my spirit, and let me meet with a gracious reception at thy tribunal.

F I N I S.



